

THE NEW LOOK

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STARBURST

BLAKE'S 7; THE NEW SEASON

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ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

A REVIEW OF THE LATEST JOHN CARPENTER MOVIE

THE ART OF EXCALIBUR

DOCTOR WHO WRITER TERRANCE DICKS
MICHAEL CASSIDY ON "THE HAND"
THE FINAL CONFLICT

CAROLINE MUNRO

TOP FANTASY FEMALE
STARS IN A NEW
HORROR FILM





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TALES FROM THE CRYPT

WE TURN THE CLOCK BACK TO 1971 AND LOOK AT ONE OF THE BEST OF THE AMICUS COMPLICATION MOVIES, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*. SEE PAGE 32.

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STARBURST LETTERS

THE FATE OF LOIS

I heard recently that it had been decided by the producers of the *Superman* films to drop the character of Lois Lane (played by the very talented Margot Kidder) from the forthcoming production of *Superman III*. Is this true?

If so, I'm sure I speak for many other *Superman* fans in saying that the exclusion of this very important leading female role can only hell the end of what has so far been an extremely enjoyable and superior series of films.

Surely the powers-that-be must realise that the character of Lois Lane is as important to the *Superman* legend as the "man of steel" himself. After all who would dream of filming a *Batman* story without including Robin.

Of course, I realise that the events as they occurred in *Superman II* might make it harder for the character to be reintroduced, but the identity of Clark Kent was frequently being discovered in the comic strips, and some way was always found to repair the damage.

Judith Conne,
Chelmsford,
Essex.

BROSINAN FIXATION

First, I would like to warn anyone of a nervous disposition, or anyone who is easily shocked, not to proceed further in reading this letter. Its subject matter could prove to be of an extremely disturbing nature and I do not wish to offend any reader of *Starburst*.

You see, I have a problem. I do not quite know how to express my dilemma in words... in fact, I do not know whether or not I possess sufficient courage... yet I must write to someone, or otherwise I may become completely insane. Whenever I pluck up enough bravado to raise my problem with family and acquaintances I receive nothing but scorn and ridicule. "No!" they say, weakly attempting to conceal their amusement, "it's impossible!"

But I digress. I now write to your illustrious magazine, vainly hoping that you can suggest a remedy; my problem is... it's very difficult to say... my problem is that I... like... reading articles written... by... John Brosnan!

The earliest symptoms of this unprecedented phenomenon reared their ugly heads in *Starburst* 10, when I agreed with Mr Brosnan that *The Black Hole* was a disappoint-

ment. Gradually, over many months, I found myself agreeing with and even enjoying the comments of Mr Brosnan. Yet it wasn't until the advent of the *It's Only a Movie* series of articles that I actually realised the enormity of my predicament. In *Starburst* 34 I actually laughed my way through Mr Brosnan's article.

But enough! I can not continue. My typing finger already quivers under the stress of writing these mere few paragraphs!

I must sign off now, with just a plea for sympathy and respect from all *Starburst* readers; can anyone suggest a cure?

Merk Willis,
Wolverhampton,
W. Midlands.

BIG BUCKS-SUCCESS

Regarding your excellent fantasy film chart found in issue 33 of your magazine, I feel that I must point out to your readers a disturbing trend toward box office success and failure which has not received careful examination.

To bring the issue into more contemporary surroundings, I will begin with *Star Wars*. This film was science fiction as many claimed it to be. Because of its outstanding accomplishments, and the universal knowledge that it had made many people, rich, erudite followers were telling the hard-core pessimists that *Star Wars* was a great film. The rhetoric followed: It's made so much money; it must be good.

Film fans were judging the worth of films on the money they a tremendous financial success and very few critics could find fault in it, especially after they were told that it was science fantasy and not made. If the film played for a week, it was assumed to be a dog.

Such logic is irresponsible and naive.

Grease and *Saturday Night Fever* were very successful films financially, but they were also thin and plastic. Can't *Stop The Music* did big business in my home country, Australia, but it was the most boring film I had seen in many years. *Xanadu* and *The Shining* were also big successes, but did the directors really deliver what they promised?

Was *The Shining* "the masterpiece of modern terror" it was purported to be? Or is "modern terror" manifested in such awful productions as *Deathship*, *He Knows You're Alone*, or the disappointing *Funhouse*?

Whatever the case, that's another story.

Films cannot be judged on the money they earn. If they all received similar advertising, marketing, and merchandising, then our views may be more logically justified. But because of budget, release dates, ratings, etc, each film is an entity to itself that can only be judged by sitting in the cinema and screaming (or plodding) through it.

Admittedly, the top ten films you listed were good in most departments. And further on, about fifty, the films were still quite good with exceptions like *The Amityville Horror* or *The Hindenburg*. But once we skid by fifty, the list becomes very depressing as good films are commercially eclipsed by hyped-up expensively-produced productions with little redemption like *The Lord of the Rings*, *Magic*, *Logan's Run* and the terrible *Dra.*

Unless my multiple scents of your compilation are blinded by depression, I do not see *Dawn of the Dead* anywhere. I can only assume that it wasn't released in Britain, though it seemed to be released everywhere else bar Antarctica: *Land of Ice and Snow* and *Very Few Movies*.

The film has been an enormous success in America, and is currently enjoying an endless midnight run.

Such is the case with several of my favourite films: they received minimal plucking or no plucking at all in your compilation.

Phantasm has been dwarfed by rubbish like *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *Prophecy*, *Rollerball*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and even *The Shaggy D.A.* for heaven's sake. I read a very naive review of this film in *Films and Filming* about 18 months ago so I assumed this horror movie was not to Britain's liking which is a shame.

My favourite films such as *Eraserhead*, *Desperately Living* (don't tell me this isn't fantasy!), *The Tin Drum*, *The Brood*, are not even mentioned.

I think it is very sad when good films are neglected in favour of hyped-up commercial efforts because it says that publicity is becoming more dominant than the movies themselves.

I find it extremely disturbing to find *Motel Hell* below *The Children*, an abysmal film, while the brainless, clichéd *Settem* 3 betters a far superior film like *Mad Max*. And what of Michael Ritchie's underrated *The Island*. Is this British public telling us that

Exorcist II: The Heretic is better?

What a mess we're in!
Where is *The Visitor*? Where is *Homobodies*? Where is *The House of Mortal Sin*? Where is *Dark Star*? Where is the public to enjoy these brilliant films?

I was disappointed to see that *Dressed to Kill* was placed so low as I know it's far superior to (are you kidding?) *Alien* or *Moonraker* or 1941.

And what of George Romero's brilliant twist on vampirism, *Martin*?

What has happened to these films?

If you are interested, the films that I think did best in Australia were (though not necessarily in order) *Mad Max*, *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, *Superman*, *Friday the 13th*, *When a Stranger Calls*, *Dressed to Kill*, *Being There* (where the dickens is that brilliant film?), *Halloween*, and *Kramer Versus Kramer*: this is only in the last two years or so. *Star Wars* is included because it is an overall box office champion.

This is an important message and it must be heard.

Mark Gavey,
No Address Given.

ALAN JONES REPLIES

I feel a reply is necessary to J. Ward of Nottingham's letter.

Two points: Firstly, because of *Starburst's* deadline which often necessitates its critics to see a film at least two months in advance at a press screening, plans for its theatrical release are usually still to be decided. This was the case when I saw *Funhouse* as nobody knew it was destined to play on the top half of a double-bill with *My Bloody Valentine* and as a result C.I.C. did not press show it. Just for the record, I do mention it in my *Happy Birthday to Me* review and J. Ward is absolutely right in saying that "it contains some fine scenes and a very neat ending".

Secondly, the gory scenes mentioned from that film were cut — but not by the censor. They were cut by the studio themselves who have a policy of not releasing X-rated films in the U.S.A. An X-rating in America means over 21 only, an R-rating means anybody, even children as long as they are accompanied by an adult, which of course, is preferable in box-office terms to a major like Paramount. This version of the movie is therefore the one we see in Britain also. *Maniac* was released with a

self-imposed X in the U.S. A. which means it could feel foul of the censor unless the releasing company truncates it themselves anticipating a problem.

This of course raises one interesting question. As the whole *raison-d'être* of a lot of recent horror movies are the gore effects, cut them and you are left with a usually feeble plot building to shock climaxes that aren't delivered. So why bother making the film in the first place?

Alan Jones,
 London.

SYBIL DANNING WRITES



How unfair! If you are going to tease Starburst readers by mentioning a few of my earlier movies, then show some fairness and let them see what remains so vivid in your memory. In gratitude for the marvelous coverage the magazine has granted me in recent issues (Starburst 31 & 33), I have enclosed black-and-white photographs, for publication, from the German sword-and-sorcery adventure *Siegfried* - which you forgot to mention - and from *Passion Pill Swingers*.

Sybil Danning,
 Hollywood,
 U.S.A.

EXCALIBUR FAILS

Once again the film world cops-out of producing something new... I'm talking about John Boorman's so called Arthurian film *Excalibur*. Being a student of the 'Dark Ages' I always look forward to seeing new visual material on Arthur, but *Excalibur* is neither new nor on Arthur.

The basis of the story is more pre-Christian Celtic than Arthurian and I'm sure relets to legends Boorman has heard in Ireland then stories of Arthur. It is about the belief that the tribal chieftain is men and god and that it is the chief's job to make sure the crops grew and the land is fruitful. Arthur is shown in the film as an ailing sovereign and the land is becoming barren and people suffering from disease and famine. We are told that *Excalibur* is based on Mort D'Arthur; by Mellory but it beers only a superficial relationship to that romance and virtually nothing to the original Arthur.

I certainly must disagree with Phil Edwards' review.

The only person with any character was Merlin, played with mystery and humour by Nicol Williamson... but the rest of the cast were rather bland. Nigel Terry as Arthur showed some promise at first but quickly lost it when he became king. No one can deny that the ladies were not beautiful, in fact they were stunning but they did little or no acting.

I find it hard to believe that Boorman spent nearly twenty years building up to this film. He couldn't have researched it that well because he twisted Mallory's story into the shape of a shillelagh. He has *Excalibur* being given to Uther and then that king placing it into the stone... in Mellory the Lady of the Lake gives it directly to Arthur. Then he has Percival substituting for Galahad and

Bedivere... finding the Holy Grail and returning the sword to the Lake. Mordred becomes Morgana's son instead of Mergawse's and Merlin is imprisoned by Morgana rather than Nimus. The number of changes and additions are many. But the thing that I find rather confusing is the way the Holy Grail becomes the symbol of power instead of *Excalibur* (the film is named after the sword!). I suppose Mr Boorman took it for granted that we all knew that the Grail was missing and what it was.

I am unhappy about the way Boorman used Mallory's Mort d'Arthur but it is a pity that once again the 'real' Arthur is neglected.

In the opening titles we are introduced to the "Dark Ages"... on then a load of horsemen dressed like a mixture of American comic grotesques and fifteenth century knights ride on the screen. Once again the big Arthurian cop-out. To me having Arthur in shining armour fighting Agincourt-like battles is like having the old V2 like space-ships in *Star Wars*. Of all the films made about Arthur most are Mellory based and all are set in the

Middle Ages, none explore the possibilities of a "Dark Ages" adventure. On tv they have had Arthur of Britons which passed reasonably well and at present BBC is rerunning *The Legend of King Arthur* which uses (or misuses) Mellory but set the scene firmly in the "Dark Ages".

Mr Boorman continues the Norman myth of the legend just like his fellow countrymen continue to propagate the Wild West myth. He didn't seem to want to take a chance like Lucas did with *Star Wars*. Come on, someone... what is wrong with de-Normanising Arthur, forgetting the king, the knights and the round table junk and explore the really old stories of Arthur? That is Arthur the soldier... the warrior... not Arthur the Norman king with his knights in shining armour. There are plenty of stories... the search for "Caladfwich", the original *Excalibur*, the wars against the Saxons and the heroes that followed Arthur... men like the one-armed spearmen Bedwyr, the great swordsmen Cai, the magician Meru (no Merlin in the old stories)

and so on. The teaming up of a group of characters like this, spending a little time on each of them and then have them going with "the kings of Britain", as the chronicler Nennius puts it, to fight the growing threat of the Saxons could make a good film. Some "fact" and some sword and sorcery.

Why doesn't someone take the chance?

Charles Tucker,
 N. Wales.

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THINGS TO COME

ARK BARK!

Indiana Jones is facing a new cliff-hanger. In court. Because it's happened again. As it always does. And, with Americans being Americans when they sniff some 'esey' green stuff in the air, it always will happen. Someone is yelling 'Stop thief!' about the film of the year. Which film? **Raiders of the Lost Ark**, of course.

Actually, it's not just someone, but a peculiarly mixed bag of people insisting that the **Ark** story is theirs and was called just that. **Ark**. The trio, which sounds rather like the villains of Indiana Jones' next adventure, includes one archaeologist, one advertising man and the somewhat controversial former treasurer of Pasadena's World Wide Church of God, would you believe... They're suing the pants off George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, screenwriter Larry Kasdan, director Philip Kaufman (who worked on the story before Larry), producer Howard Kazanjian, Lucasfilm, the Raiders Company, Paramount, the International Creative Management

agency, and oh, just about everybody else (with money) on the film's credits, apart from Indiana himself, for a mind-boggling total of... 110 million dollars!

The angry trio's scenario goes like this. They took their **Ark** notion to ICM agent Ben Benjamin in April, 1977. Lucas and Spielberg have made no secret of the fact that they first discussed the film while on a Hawaiian holiday together when George was fleeing the **Star Wars** opening in May 1977.

Now these dates are too close for comfort—stretching the bounds of incredulity too far, say the threesome. All the more so, when it is realized that Ben Benjamin happened to be George Lucas' agent until 1976 and Steven Spielberg's until just a matter of months ago... Ahah!

Lucas' lawyer, though, calls the charges ridiculous, and leaves it at that. George's Lucasfilm vice-president Sid Gennis goes somewhat further. "They are absolutely, 100%, unequivocally untrue." So there!

When—if?—the case comes to court,

any decision is likely to be influenced by the 1976 copyright infringement case concerning George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" hit and a 1962 number called "He's so Fine." The judge in that case decided that Harrison has not deliberately plagiarized the original song. He had merely settled for the particular combination of notes and harmonies "because his subconscious knew it already he had worked in a song his conscious mind did not remember."

Obviously, it is being suggested much the same thing could have happened here. If, that is, it can be proved that Lucas, or his associates, had access to the **Ark** script, not deliberately, maybe not even consciously, but from, say, flipping through any number of screenplays to be found lying around ICM shelves.

So, are George and Steve going to be taken to the cleaners? Will the archaeologist, ad man and church treasurer make a killing? Will Indiana rush to the rescue...? No, but Philip Kaufman might. Since he's named in the

suit as well, Kaufman may hold the key to it all. The solution may not lie in when Lucas and Spielberg first discussed the film in Hawaii, but rather when Kaufman first worked on Lucas' screenplay treatment.

And anyway, didn't George recently reveal the actual genesis of his **Ark** goes back to 'a daydream' he had about the kind of old B-movie he'd like to see made again—and that was way back in 1973! He then knocked out a tale of a college professor type, who scoured the world in search of adventures, and nightclubbed back home with slim blonde on each arm. (Kaufman later wrote out the blondes).

If George Lucas can prove that 1973 daydream—if, indeed he even has to—his accusers just don't have a case. In short: They should have been reading *Time* magazine which mentioned the 1973 dreaming, and not just the film's publicity material which makes a meal out of that 1977 Hawaiian clambake of the Lucasberger.

(To be cont'd... we're sure)



Left: Producer of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, George Lucas: accused of incorporating some one else's story ideas into his latest film. Above: A scene from the opening of the film. Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford) is almost mangled by a giant stone bell bearing. Right: Innocent bystander and director of *Raiders* Steven Spielberg, who was not involved in the scripting of *Raiders*. See *Ark Bark!*





Above: James Farentino in a scene from British director Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, which stars the *Star Wars*/*Raiders* actor, Harrison Ford.

STAR WARS III.

Larry Kasdan—but who else?—will be scripting George's yarn for *Revenge of the Jedi*. He can start work now that the writers' strike is over, and indeed that the directors' strike never happened, enabling him to complete editing of his directing debut, *Body Heat*. *Jedi* will be produced by the *Raiders* man, Howard Kazanjian and directed by Britisher Richard Marquand. Lucas and Gary Kurtz are sitting this one out... though they'll be watching on the sidelines.

STRIKE A LIGHT.

The Beverly Hills are alive with the sound of... relief! It is actually audible all over Los Angeles. The directors' strike, the most feared industrial threat in Hollywood history, had just been settled at the very last minute.

It is business as usual again. With everyone back at work.

The directors' strike plans (and it would have been the first time that the Directors Guild had stopped work) would have hurt more than writers' and actors'. It would have left most of the top studios, the small independent companies as well, without enough product to open for the Autumn and Winter seasons, and maybe as far ahead as next Spring. It would have, in a word, been disastrous for Hollywood... and in the end, our own local cinemas, or what's left of them in Britain.

The strike, you see, would not simply

have meant directors refrained from making movies—they couldn't have been editing any, either. (All Directors' Guild contract forms, give directors the right of first cut). So even any film that had been finished before the strike's deadline, could not have been cut and polished and made ready for release.

As the strike still loomed over Hollywood (rather like the LA smog) most movies in production suddenly become suspenseers. Could they finish before the strike stopped them altogether? The simple answer was No! Five top projects, at least, from John Huston's mighty *Annie* musical to Robin Williams' follow-up to *Popeye*, *The World According to Garp* would have been shuttered in mid-shoot... and would have had to sit out the strike. A whole bunch of others were trying like mad to beat the lowering of the boom on their efforts, often by working up to 16 hours a day.

Paul Schrader, for example, was working like stink, Saturdays included, to wrap his *Cat People* re-make before the dread deadline of July 1. He turned his schedule completely around, working with his stars first (Nestassia Kinski, Malcolm McDowell, John Hurt) and leaving the special effects to last. And he still failed... So Paul's smile, which is rare enough at the best of times, was about the broadest in Hollywood when the strike was called off and he found he didn't have to sit on his thumb for weeks or months awaiting his union's permission to complete just the one

more week's shooting he had to do.

At Disney's studio, director Steven Lisberger managed to bring in their movie, *Ton* in the proverbial nick of time—to the relief of stars Jeff Bridges and David Warner. Like so many LA movies this year, *Ton* had started production earlier than planned in an effort to beat off the strike. Disney wanted it out on time. And no wonder. Disney's business (of its films rather than his pleasure parks) continues to drop as the studio tries to lock into what its audience really wants today. (Whatever that is, it doesn't appear to be Elliott Gould, *The Devil and Max Devlin* nor even *Dragonslayer*...)

Also finished shooting on time were Paramount's *Jekyll and Hyde*... *Together Again* (as if we'll ever care about that one, I feel in my bones); John Frankenheimer's *The Equals*, away on location in Japan; and *Pertners*, which John Hurt made since completing his *Cat People* role (that's how fast that one went down). Plus Tobe Hooper's *Polyester* and Sidney Furie's *The Entity*, with the scrumptious Barbara Hershey.

Biggest movie, or at least the most expensive, to make the deadline was Ridley Scott's Hollywood debut, *Blade Runner*, for Alan Ladd's company. Scott started his futuristic detective yarn—yet another possible film series role for Harrison Ford, the super-serie-star—on March 9. And the Ladd led was getting mighty nervous about him being able to get it together before the strike

shut up shop. Costs were hitting the 25 million dollar mark, and the filmand rumours had it that Ridley Scott was in great trouble, "way behind schedule... and that budget will double if the movie gets trapped by the strike." As things turned out, Scott pulled it off. He finished shooting on June 30. One week late. Then again, one day early... 24 hours before the strike would have begun.

THE THING

Next, a trifle early due to the weather, John Carpenter and a ten-man second unit crew, flew off into the wild white yonder of Alaska's Juneau ice-fields to shoot backgrounds for *The Thing*. Shooting proper was due to begin on August 24. With, so I heard, an all-male cast. From John's telexes back to Universal, it was rough going. For two days, Carpenter says his unit was trapped in a black-out (white-out?) with no water or power and an unnecessary guest appearance by the Alaskan version of the fog... nobody said filmmaking is easy, John!

TRUMBULL COMETH

Natalie Wood, Cliff Robertson and *Heaven's Gate* man Christopher Welken (well, let's be polite and call him *The Deer Hunter* Oscar-winner) have been

THINGS TO COME

selected by Douglas Trumbull as his top stars for the film he's been trying to get off the ground for an age—**Brainstorm**. Over the years, his script has been passed from one studio to another, been turned down mainly for reasons of high-finance, and now that he had an MGM deal, it looked for awhile as if the director's strike would cancel him out yet again. No way... Shooting begins in the Autumn, once Doug finishes his latest special effects assignment on Ridley Scott's **Bleed Runner**.

VIDEO—WHAT ELSE?

And why were the members of the Directors' Guild threatening to withdraw their extremely remunerative labour? Money, of course. What else? Video boom money. Like the actors and writers before them, the film-makers were after a larger slice of the new telly-pie from cablevision, video cassettes and disc sales. Now that all three sections of the industry have won their rightful increases, Hollywood appears calm, settled, safe for the next few years. Unless the make-up people, the special effects men, the stunters or the janitors decide they also need a slice of the video action. Or, more likely, until satellite-tv begins to encroach as much as the other systems.

O'BANNON WRITES.

Writers' strike or not, Dan O'Bannon is one of the busiest scripters around this town. His **Dead and Buried** has lately opened in France to good business (as **Reincarnation**). October 1 is the start date for production of Dan and Don Jacoby's **Blue Thunder** at the Burbank Studios. This is one of Ray Stark's never-ending supply of Columbia movies but produced by Dan's **Alien** cohort, Gordon Carroll. It's not sf, but a suspenser with Roy Scheider as an ex-Army chopper pilot now flying for the LAPD and dealing with intense pollution and racial unrest. "It reflects the uncertain fever of contemporary America," say Starkman Guy McElwaine, "and Scheider, director John Badham and Carroll should give it that extra dimension to make it a major screen event." To say nothing of Dan's work on it to start with!

And then early into the New Year, Dan and his **Alien** and **Dead and Buried** partner, Ronald Shusett, see work begin on **Total Recall** which they've sold to the Disney studio, who obviously dig it. The Disneys are spending up to 15 million dollars on it... that's five mill' more than on either Ray Bradbury's fantasy-suspenser **Something Wicked This Way Comes** or their robot offering, **Tron**.



TARZAN BO-NUS

More than strikes are being settled... Bo Derek's **Tarzan The Ape Man** movie has been freed of its legal shackles and has gone on release as planned. Although the judge (in New York) suggested eight or nine of Bo's nude scenes be clipped, or indeed snipped, out. Or, rather, the heirs of the Terzan creator, his fortune and his copyright of some 67 novels, 26 of them Tarzan trips, and the rest constituting his **Mars, Venus** and **Pellucidar** series.

It was another Estate hassle which held up release of the Belgian cartoon, **Terzoon, Shame of the Jungle**, for five years until the makers agreed to drop the name "Terzoon". The 1975 film went around most of the world as **Shame of the Jungle** and eventually hit Britain come 1980 as **Junglebecker**. By which, time, naturally, it had lost much of its sting.

Now the (grey?) heirs were complaining that Bo's film, produced by her and directed by hubby John Derek, was not a re-make of the Johnny Weissmuller original of 1932, nor even of its previous re-tread in 1959, which put Denny Miller

in the jungle-issue Y-fronts. The ERB mob saw it as simply, or skimpily, another Bo-in-the-buff exercise, with more emphasis (too much, they said) on Bo's Jane than on Miles O'Keeffe's apeman. (Well, who would you rather look at...?)

The Estate lost. The canny judge hung them on their own edicts. When trying to persuade MGM to make more apeman movies in 1970, the ERB Estate had pontificated that Terzan never died—only "the particular creative approach" to him in movies died, changed, moved on. Exactly, said Hizzoner. And this was Bo and John Derek's creative approach to the character.

The judge saw all three movies and ruled that, considering the changes in social morals and modes, the new one kept faith with the 1932 script—thought rather suggestive in its day what with Mia Farrow's Mum, Maureen O'Sullivan, swimming around jungle pools in the raw...

Next case! It could be said that the nitpicking Estate folk were merely copying the old man's lead. Right from the 1912 birth of Terzan, Edgar Rice Burroughes (1875-1950) fought to retain ownership of his character. He queried that first sale cheque (for \$700) when he found it marked "For All Rights". He'd only sold magazine rights to the *All Story*

publication, he said. What else is there? said the editors. "Maybe moving picture rights or something..." Terzan eventually made it not only into movies but radio, comics, television and various other kinds of merchandising, of course. Canny fellow, ERB. And disappointed with the films, according to his daughter Joan, who married the last silent Tarzan, **Tarzan and the Golden Lion** (1926), James H. Pierce. "My father... wrote such a fantastic wealth of material and it seemed to him that some of it should have been suitable for the screen. Instead, Hollywood writers changed the stories and created their own version of Dad's hero. For years he tried in vain to get film producers to maintain an integrity with his work. Finally, he gave up, frustrated, and let them do what they were going to do anyway." His heirs obviously do not feel the same.

LORD TARZAN

To be frank, all the Burroughes Estate fuss about Bo Derek's nude fleshes is just a smokescreen. What the heirs are really worried about is not this new MGM film but how it might affect another studio's plans for the definitive Terzan movie. This is the eternally on-off-on-off plans of Warner Brothers to film **Chinatown/Shampoo** writer Robert Towne's **Lord Greystoke**. First time

THINGS TO COME

around, and that was a long time ago—back in 1976—his scenario had been called just *Greystoka*. No matter. It's the same script and the Burroughes brood went it made even more so than Bob Towne does. They view it as the only script true to the spirit of the books.

Towne's treatment is utterly straight, covering the entire Tarzan legend, from how the British aristocrat couple's baby son was raised by the jungle apes, Kala in particular, and grew into heroic manhood, king of his domain. (Burroughes once admitted he'd probably pinched all this from the *Romulus and Remus* legend about the founders of Rome being suckled as babes by a she-wolf.) Warner Brothers don't quite see *Greystoka* as being another *Superman* and would probably prefer it to be a send-up, since the public acceptance of the Frankenstein and Dracula satires, and now George Hamilton camping it up (very badly) as *Zorro*, *The Gay Blade*. Warners also point to the major flop of Lord Lew Grade's straight *Legend of the Lone Ranger* as further proof of their argument. Not that *Lone Ranger* was written by someone as smart as Bob Towne. (What Grade film is?)

Obviously, the ERB bunch view the Towne script as a chance to get Tarzan born-again—the start of a whole new series of apeman movies, no doubt. Or they did before Bo and John Derek exercised MGM's rights to re-make *Tarzan The Ape Man*... coming up with a Jane who's more spirited than Tarz'. John actually wanted to call the movie *Me, Jane*. That was the first time the Burroughes clan yelled Foul! Now due to Bo, old Tarzan may never be the same again.

UNIVERSAL BOB

The man who almost single-handedly turned Avco Embassy into the best fantasy company around, has quit in the latest musical-chairs game of executives in Hollywood. Robert Rehme is the name. He's appeared in these pages before. And quite rightly so. He was the Avco president backing such enter-

prises as John Carpenter's *The Fog* and *Escape From New York* (he sure left with a winner!) Jamie Lee Curtis' *Prom Night* and *Road Games* and Joe Dante's *The Howling*.

Bob's now at Universal in a job created exclusively for him—president of the distribution and marketing division. This means, sadly, he won't have too much of

a say-so in movie-making. Or not just yet. His replacement at Avco is Frank Capra Jr., son of the veteran director. He's not quite the type to continue Bob's fantasy trends—not that any newcomer continues his predecessor's pattern. Capra's past credits, though, do include being associate producer on some of the *Planet of the Apes* movies.



Above left: T.C. Quist (Don McLeod) in a scene from *The Howling*. Top right: Forrie J. Ackerman, editor of the long-running *American* horror movie magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, appeared briefly in *The Howling* as a customer who is berated by fast-talking Dick Miller for fingering the merchandise. Above: A scene cut from the final print of *The Howling*. Karen White (Dae Wallace) is surrounded by the inmates of Dr. Wagner's health resort.

zan for skin. White Skin. Tarzan. Heigh ho! You learn something new every day ...

SUPERMAN II

It sure took long enough in opening here, but now that it has, *Superman II* has made up for lost time—by creaming just about every other movie around America. Yes, including *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (or to begin with, anyway). One by one, Supie breeched as many as eleven American film industry records. (I think it already holds the record for the number of lawsuits per film). In just one superweek, the film earned more ticket money than any film in US movie history: 24 million dollars at some 1,395 cinemas. That knocked something of a black hole into the 20 million record of *The Empire Strikes Back* (but that was achieved in much fewer cinemas, 824 to be precise). And then, after seventeen days, Supie had amassed close on 54 million smackers ...

About time, too, producer Pierre Spengler would probably say. Just a month or so before this Supie bonanza, Spengler had been telling all of us

gathered at Cannes that the first and second *Superman* films were still about 55 million dollars in the red! (I had heard that the films were worse off than that—70 million in the hole!) Hence Spengler's words: "If I is the blockbuster we expect it to be, we should finally be able to break into profit."

L.A. FLASHES

Sssh! Whisper it do, but George Romeo and Stephen King planning a 3-D movie together ... They're beaten to it by Earl Owensby, the Orson Welles of New Carolina. He's begun America's first 3-D movie since 1953, *Rotweiler*, a fierce guard-dog snapper of a movie ... Director Ernest Pintoff, no one to write home about, has 20 million dollars backing for his sf thriller, *Aquarius Mission*, if he can get the necessary co-operation he needs from the Ruskies ... Stefanie Powers, *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.* that was long before being so

Hart to Hart, has been documentary filming on mainland China ... Clint Eastwood started special effects shooting for his espionage tale, *Fire Fox*. Move over Roger Moore! ... After

S.O.B., and his London-made *Victor, Victoria*, Blake Edwards has devised an sf comedy. Title? What else but *Far Out* ... Such modest folk, Bo and John Derek have their on-screen credits in *Tarzan The Ape Man* much smaller than their unions dictate ... And back in the courts, the once-upon-a-time angelic Farrah Fawcett is suing the similarly once upon a prime *Six Million Dollar Man* Lee Majors for half his home. Charming! What children these LA folks really are!

So that's Los Angeles, summer of '81 style. Not a lot has changed. Money is still the order of the day. Henry Winkler is the 1,600th or so to have his star impacted in the paving stones of Hollywood Boulevard ... and as if to underline the reason why George Lucas has quit town, 20th Century-Fox's new owner has invited two old chums to be directors of the company. I just wonder what the hell they know about movies, or come to that what movie styles and genres they'll sanction in future. Their names? Dr Henry Kissinger ... and ex-President Gerry Ford. Well, weren't they once called the Abbott and Costello of Washington?

ALTERNATE TARZAN

While in LA, I heard of another Tarzan re-make in the works. An outfit called Weiss Global Enterprises, which sounds like something out of a Joe Dante or Mel Brooks movie, are preparing *The Adventurers of Tarzan*, based on ERB's *Return of Tarzan*, and filmed in 1920 as the fourth and last jungle adventure starring the original apeman, Elmo Lincoln (or peace officer Otto Linkenhelfer before D.W. Griffith put the giant into *Birth of a Nation* and other silent movies). "I was the fourth Tarzan," Lincoln once revealed. "The first three fell out of trees, breaking either an arm or leg and couldn't continue. I'm listed as first because I held on to those limbs until the end of the picture."

Heading up the combine behind this new Tarzan plan, is one Adrian Weiss, the grandson of one of the two Weiss brothers who made the 1920 film ... in the days when Louise Lorraine, was Jane, like Bo, for one movie only.

Footnote: Where does the Tarzan name come from? According to Burroughes' first book, it's ape lingo. *Tar* for white,

QUEST FOR FIRE

Preview by Tony Crawley

We are in Neanderthal times... The Ulam tribe is attacked by the savage Wagabou. It's a ferocious, blood-letting battle. The Ulam are nearly wiped out, and the Wagabou move on with the defeated tribe's most precious possession, fire. Without it, they are doomed. Unless... Three of the youngest surviving warriors are dispatched on a perilous trek far from their home terrain, facing hostile land, climates, other warring tribes, gigantic mammoths, bears, wolves and sabre-toothed lions. During a dust-up with cannibals, they rescue a young girl captive and the quartet move ever onwards in search of that which they have lost. The secret of making fire.

That is what the Franco-Canadian movie, *Quest for Fire*, is all about. Only more so... It is *not* about Raquel Welch and Martine Beswick strutting their eminent stuff in doe-skin bikinis one million years BC. It is *not* about Ray Harryhausen weaving his personable magic in ancient Greece. It is most certainly *not* about Ringo Starr falling overboard for Barbara Bach in *Caveman*.

What it is, in fact, is a stunningly realistic recreation of the violent world of primeval man—and one of the most remarkable films to have come my way in many a long year. So far, in truth, I've seen little of the film—a promo reel screened at the recent Cannes festival. But in common with the rest of that particular audience, I can't forget the almost documentary style footage... and certainly cannot wait to view the full, finished version.

That might take some time... Already the film has been in production for three years, and shooting since October last year on previously unfilmed locales in the remotest and iciest hinterlands of Canada and Scotland's highlands and in the blistering 120-degree heat of the Rift Valley in Kenya. Director Jean-Jacques Annaud, cast and crew are currently at work in central Ontario, shooting on the extensive marshes and dramatic caves of the Bruce Peninsula—the Finger of Canada jutting out into Georgian Bay.

Quest for Fire is science fantasy with a devastating difference. Instead of looking forward in the time tunnel, it gazes back, way back in time to the dawn of civilisation. "The future began," goes the movie's sales pitch, "80,000 years ago."

"We're doing for the uncharted past what *Star Wars* did for the uncharterable future," comments co-producer John Kemeny, whose previous films include *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* and *Atlantic City*. "That's what science fantasy is all about," stresses director Annaud. "Nobody

thinks it's improper to fantasise about the future, so surely we're entitled to use the same technique when looking back across the millennia... Intelligent speculation, which by research, may lead us to the truth."

Hollywood has grasped the point. The film will be released in North America by the *Star Wars* company, 20th Century-Fox. And that's close to a Good Housekeeping seal of approval in movie terms.

By any current standards of film-making, *Quest for Fire* is a colossal exercise in logistics and immense love of subject. Locations, suitable for recreating stone-age times, the ice age and so on, had to be found across five continents—before three were settled upon. Actors able to pass muster as early primeval man—and woman—had to be discovered mainly from stage and mime artists. Animals had to be ferried around the world like tourists. Bears flew in planes, wolves howled along American highways and Indian elephants were transported from London to Scotland, from Los Angeles to Ontario... and then dressed up as their



Top: Indian elephants were dressed up with carpet-sized wigs for the film to stand in for woolly mammoths. The effect is impressive. Above: A scene from the forthcoming release *Quest for Fire*. Right: A group of prehistoric men make threatening gestures from the safety of a tree retreat. Inset right: Dawn Chong plays Ika, a youngster who joins the surviving warriors on their quest for fire.

ancient forebears/wolves/elephants!

Imagine, for an instant, trying to dress an elephant in a wig as big as a carpet. Plus adding on twisty tusks almost as long as the pachyderms themselves. Or how about training a pack of wolves—and a bear—to maul a human being, and make it look good ... yet safe.

Associate producer Michael Moore supervised all these extraordinary animal action sequences—including turning a contemporary lion into one of its long since extinct sabre-toothed kinfolk. Just how do you do that? "Very carefully," is Moore's obvious reply.

But the brain behind this entire venture is French director Jean-Jacques Annaud, a 1978 Oscar-winner with his first movie, *Black and White in Colour*, made in the African Camerouns where he'd spent his National Service in the French Army film corps. Aged 38, Annaud has been film mad since a kid—and fascinated with pre-history from about that far back as well. He ran into a like mind when meeting Polanski's chief scriptwriter

Gerard Brach (*Knife in the Water*, *Cul de Sac*, *Tess*, etc). Both film men had read Rosny Aïné's *La Guerre du Feu/The Fire War* and agreed that the vital theme of man and fire could make an helluva movie.

They were right!
"We show early man as I believe he truly was," says Annaud, "a peaceable creature except when roused, a stranger in an environment he couldn't understand and had reason to fear. I needed huge frozen landscapes and the adventure of filming in such remote areas to enable me to get into the mind of my characters. I needed to show—and to feel—how these primitives dealt with their work and its dangers when they themselves were so small and weak. I know that the toughness of the locations helped me, and my actors, to experience for ourselves the great adventure of man against the elements."

With the North American market already sewn up with Fox, there was a rush of buyers from other territories clamouring for the movie after the promo reels screenings in

Cannes. And I'm not surprised—the visuals, the action are sensational, and make Kubrick's stoneage prologue to 2001 look exceedingly tame.

There will be no difficulty with dubbing or sub-titling the film around the world, either. For the film has no understandable dialogue. Instead of Raquel Welch or Ringo Starr grunting away in their Gucci apparel, Annaud's film utilised a whole new language devised by *Clockwork Orange* author Anthony Burgess from his fund of Indo-European language roots—plus a complimentary body-talk devised by Desmond Morris, the anthropologist-author of *The Naked Ape* and *Manwatching*.

Burgess' words may baffle us—but not the meaning of Morris's gestural lingo.

Both men are reportedly delighted with the way Annaud's film has been panning out. "One of the emotions we're seeking to dispel in this film," explains Desmond Morris, "is the misconception that early man was a lumbering lout always dragging women off by the hair and living in loutish conditions. If you study the social life of primitive man from the remains we have, you discover that he could only have succeeded if there was a considerable amount of mutual aid, co-operation and love within his group ... contrasting strikingly with the killing and hunting he had to do to survive. You have to show both sides to get the full picture."

"What we're capturing in this film," adds Anthony Burgess, "is the moment when man took the first step towards creating a civilisation. Fire was the most revolutionary thing in all man's history, a discovery so basic to the whole progress of our race that we can't underestimate its importance. With it, we became a different kind of being—we became what we are now, a fire-using animal. Fire in the light around us, fire in our engines, in our jet-planes and rockets ..."

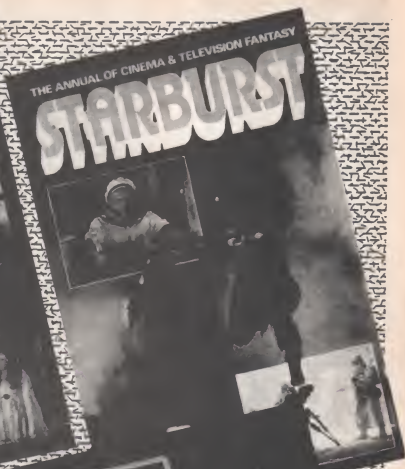
"In addition to the spectacle and adventure, we're making a very optimistic statement," notes the executive producer, Michael Gruskoff. (He's the ex-agent who brought Doug Trumbull and writer Michael Cimino together for *Silent Running*, and also produced Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* and Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu*.) "When you see the obstacles and hardships endured by our ancestors to prevail over their environment, you realise that man is a survivor."

Annaud's actors certainly are. ... Three young Americans play the fire questing warriors: Everett McGill, Ron Perlman and Nameer El Kadi ... and Kadi's twin brother, Naseer, is also in the cast. The girl they rescue from the cannibals is Canadian by birth and Chinese-French-Irish-Indian and black by parentage. Rae Dawn Chong is the daughter of Tommy Chong of the Cheech and Chong dope-head comedy duo. She's worked for Disney and was sacked from the *FM* rock movie because she was only 16 and the director thought she was 21. "They never asked me my age, so I never told them." She's only 20 now and prepared for the movie, with her co-stars in a gymnasium for a month before shooting.

"Our roles take a lot of muscle and very little wardrobe," she says. "All I wear is an exotic paint job and a fantastic hair-do most of the time."

Once the young lila joins the warriors Naoh, Amoukar and Gaw on their journey, a gradual change comes over these far from strip-cartoon primal man. They begin to experience mankind's first shared emotions. Laughter, sorrow, compassion, concern and, indeed, love for another. We see, as we did in that Cannes promo-reel, ourselves. We are their children.





TOMORROW THE WORLD!

From a humble beginning in 1977, *Starburst* has flourished and grown into the magazine it is today. In issue 35, we gave you eight extra pages in full colour. In issue 36, the magazine went to full A4 size. But we're not finished yet. July saw the release of the first *Starburst Poster Magazine* featuring *Excalibur*. August brings the release of the very first *Starburst Annual* (all-new, no reprint!).

Doctor Who Monthly: 44 pages devoted to extensive coverage of the Doctor Who phenomenon. Story synopses of old shows, rare photographs and interviews with the makers of the series. From all good newsgagents, or if in difficulty subscribe, only £4.90 for 12 issues. Send 50p for a sample copy.

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Please send all mail order to D.angerous Visions, 19f Spital Road, Malden, Essex. Make all cheques payable to Dangerous Visions. Send no cash.



BELLS



Preview by Tony Crawley

Now hear this. You've been warned before. But this time, whatever you do... *don't* answer the phone! It's become, well, explosive is close enough. Someone, somewhere, is tampering with the phone system and turning that most familiar and harmless piece of household and office equipment into a veritable death machine.

The first victim, inevitably enough, is a young girl. *Brrng! brrng!* goes a public phone in an underground station. She picks it up and is not around to catch the next train home. She's blasted by a combination of intensified sound and high voltage electricity.

The authorities are baffled and play safe accordingly. Her bizarre death is put down to "heart failure."

Her father is not satisfied. He asks a friend, ecologist Richard Chamberlain, to make some extra enquiries while attending a

national ecology conference in the city of the explosive telephones. Chamberlain meets his old mentor (John Houseman, from *The Fog*) but any questions they ask about the girl's death are blocked by red tape, closed mouths and deep-coursed frowns.

And no wonder, for other very sudden deaths are happening across town. The only thing they have in common. The phone.

Now it would not be beyond the realms of movieland possibility that Michael Anderson's first movie since settling in his third wife's neck of the woods, Vancouver, grew out of some film executive saying, "How do we follow *Scanners*?" To which one response might have been... "Yeah, that Cronenberg movie is sure ringing bells at the box-office..." "Hey wait a minute, I think you've got it... *Bells!*"

Stranger things have been known in film circles. This time, however, that is far from the truth.

The *Bells* scenario has been around on

Hollywood shelves for almost as long as *Scanners* was. Some years ago, it greatly intrigued Hollywood's First Artists, that superstar combine of Newman, Poitier, McQueen, Hoffman and La Streisand. Despite (or because of) such talent, First Artists more or less went down the tubes and is now into producing men's clothes instead of movies. *Bells* was found tucked away in some treasure trove corner of properties (between the jackets and the jeans, perhaps) by two former staffers of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (their BBC). Stanley Colbert and Robert Cooper had their own separate companies and merged in order to make the film.

Colbert remembered a young Canadian writer he'd met at CBC, John Kent Harrison (a 1980 Oscar nominee for *Bravery in the Field*) and brought him in to re-tool the old script. Cooper played his part by signing Michael Anderson, David Lean's one-time assistant, and more familiar to us of course for *Logan's Run*, *Orca*, among other movies. Together they persuaded Richard Chamberlain to forego the vacation he wanted after six gruelling months shooting *Shogun* in Japan, and the rest of the casting gelled after that coup—John Houseman, and local lovely Sarah Botsford.

She plays an artist painting a mural for the telephone company and using that position to try to get more information for our bearded hero. Result: She loses her job. Almost her life as well.

For a time, it looks as old Houseman, who's obviously in the pay of the all-powerful phone company, could be the mastermind behind the death-device. That thought is blown apart when Houseman is. He answers the phone—silly fellow—and blood gushes from eyes, nose and mouth and he (or his stunt-double) is blown right across the room, straight through a pair of glass doors and out of the film... and the running as the killer.

"*Bells* is a first-class script," comments Michael Anderson, "full of tension, suspense and mystery and some very *personal* special effects, several of these have never been accomplished on screen before."

"Like what?"

Silence from Anderson. "I prefer to tantalise my audience," he explains. "I'm not going to reveal any of the effects just now."

He might not (spoilsport), but I can list a few. Victims, like Houseman, are literally catapulted across rooms. Tear ducts enlarge and pop out. Telephones melt in close-up. Bodies shake... and shatter. Son of *Scanners*!

Many behind these effects—and various others still on the secret list—is Bill Myatt, brought in to Toronto from Hollywood for the job. His previous movies include *The Towering Inferno*, 1941 and another Spielberg production, another flop, in fact, *Used Cars*.

"We spent a full week shooting special effects tests before the actor's rehearsals and principal photography began," says Myatt. "This was to make certain all the complicated elements fell into place during the actual shoot—and, of course, to make them frighteningly and cinematically realistic."

"*Bells*," adds Michael Anderson, as tantalisingly as ever, "is the *Jaws* of the telephone!"

Maybe so, but I can't help feeling the title is a little weak. For all the unit's enthusiasm, I can't shake the voice of Tony Hancock in my memory doing his awful impersonation of Charles Laughton in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and bemoaning, "The bells... the bells...!"

For what it's worth, fellas, my suggestion is... *Hell's Bells*.

Feature by Stephen Jones

Something strange is happening to the women in the town of Stepford: overnight they are changing into "perfect" stereotypes. This is the unusual premise of Bryan Forbes' neglected science fiction thriller, **The Stepford Wives**.

Katherine Ross stars as Joanna Eberhart, a part-time photographer, who is persuaded by her husband, Walter (Peter Masterson), to move the family from the noise and bustle of New York to the rural Connecticut town of Stepford.

Soon after they arrive, Walter becomes involved with Stepford's secretive Men's Association, which meets in an old shuttered mansion and is presided over by the mysterious Dale Gribble (A suavely sinister Patrick O'Neal).

Stranded in the new community, Joanna is befriended by Bobby (Pauley Prentiss), a spirited and chaotic neighbour who has also recently arrived. The two friends become increasingly aware that most of the other women in the town are complacent, glossy housewives straight out of the pages of a *Playboy* fantasy: their homes gleam and sparkle as in a television commercial and they exist only to fulfil their husbands' every whim.

When one of their friends (Tina Louise)—and then Bobby herself—goes away for the weekend and returns "changed", Joanna realizes that her turn is coming and she must fight back to retain her identity.

Escaping from her husband, Joanna's desperate flight brings her to Bobby's now-spotless home where, in fear and panic, she stabs her friend repeatedly with a kitchen knife—only to discover that Bobby no longer bleeds!

In a shattering climax, a rain-soaked Joanna is finally lured into the echoing corridors of the Men's Association sanctum, where she is confronted by a victorious Gribble. Her time limit is up, he explains, and in an exact replica of her bedroom she is faced with a blank-eyed, perfect android duplicate of herself, created and programmed to replace her by Walter and the other men of Stepford.

In a chilling final sequence, the camera slowly glides through the sterile, regimented aisles of a supermarket, picking out the wives in summer dresses and floppy hats methodically filling their trolleys and greeting each other with banal pleasantries. Joanna is among them.

Made in 1974, **The Stepford Wives** has unfortunately suffered from erratic distribution. Originally released by Columbia Pictures in America, the film was almost totally ignored and quickly sold off to television. The company distributing it in Britain collapsed before it could be released, and consequently the movie had an isolated showing at the 1976 London Film Festival—to audience and critical acclaim—before being broadcast on BBC-TV. In 1978 it received a restricted release in British cinemas through Contemporary Films—a company better known for its handling of sub-titled European features.

The Stepford Wives is British director Bryan Forbes' first American film (he made it between **The Ragging Moon** (1971) and **The Slipper and the Rose** (1975)), and it is all the more remarkable that he captures the essence of middle-class American paranoia so perfectly on the screen.

Admittedly, Forbes is helped by a literate and suspenseful script by William Goldman (Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid; Marathon Man etc.) that successfully overcomes the genre clichés (like the climactic thunderstorm and Joanna's passive

The Stepford



Something strange is happening
in the town of Stepford.

Where the men spend their nights doing something secret
And every woman acts like every man's dream of the
"perfect" wife

Where a young woman watches the
dream become a nightmare.

And sees the nightmare engulf her best friend.
And realizes that any moment, any second—
her turn is coming.



Wives



Above left: *The Stepford Wives*, all looking like they just stepped out of the pages of *Good Housekeeping*. Top: Joanna (Katherine Ross) manages to get into the Stepford Men's Association building, but is less than delighted with what she finds there. Above right: Joanna becomes really uneasy when her best friend, the formerly sloppy Bobby (Paula Prentiss), falls victim to the mysterious ailment that is affecting the women of Stepford and turning them into "perfect housewives". Below left: The advertising artwork for the film.

resistance to her fate) and instead works effectively on a number of levels.

"You can only set out to entertain," Forbes said at the time. "If you set out to give a message, you play to empty houses." Certainly *The Stepford Wives* can be enjoyed as a straightforward thriller with a remarkably off-beat denouement, but there are other themes adroitly woven into its superficially simplistic storyline.

At its most obvious it can be viewed as a metaphor for the way women are brainwashed by today's consumer society, and in the same way the concept of men prepared to change their women into vacuum *Playboy*-type ideals. But throughout the film there also runs the underlying theme of the submergence and changing of individuality—a basic human fear that is here exploited with echoes of Siegel/Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and, to a lesser extent, Arnold's *It Came From Outer Space*.

The source of Goldman's screenplay is a novel by Ira Levin, better known as the author of *The Boys From Brazil* and *Rosemary's Baby*, and the plot of *The Stepford Wives* has

much in common with the latter title: Joanna, like Rosemary, finds herself trapped in an unfamiliar environment (in *Rosemary's Case* it was the new apartment block), her only friends are subtly disposed of, an apparently understanding doctor is unable to help, and ultimately she is betrayed into the hands of her enemies by her husband. Although *Rosemary's Baby* is probably the better movie, it is interesting to see how these similar storylines are explored by Roman Polanski as an occult theme and by Forbes as a science fiction subject.

The strength in Forbes' film lies in building an atmosphere of unease by his ability to make the everyday life of Stepford appear to be not quite right. Simple, familiar images develop ominous overtones, such as a bus full of staring children or a minor traffic accident that takes on a greater significance.

The full implications and background behind Cobb's plans are never revealed (although at one point he is linked with developing technological robots at Disneyland) and his reasons for turning a small rural community into a male chauvinist's dream are never clarified.

That the disturbing final image leaves the film relatively open-ended was exploited last year when a made-for-television movie titled *The Revenge of the Stepford Wives* was shown in America. I strongly doubt that it could equal the style and originality of the original film.

The Stepford Wives (1974)

Katherine Ross (Joanna), Paula Prentiss (Bobby), Peter Masterson (Walter), Nanette Newman (Carol), Tina Louise (Charmaine), Carol Ross (Dr Francher), Patrick O'Neal (Dale Gabe), William Price (like Mazard).

Directed by Bryan Forbes, Screenplay by William Goldman based on the novel by Ira Levin, Photographed by Owen Roizman, Edited by Timothy Gess, Music composed and conducted by Michael Small, Make-up by Andy Cienelle and Dick Smith, Production Design by Gene Callahan, Associate Producer, Roger M. Rothstein, Produced by Edgar J. Scherick.

A Fads/Cinema Associates Production. Released by Columbia Pictures (USA) and Contemporary Films (UK).

Time: 115 mins

Cert: AA

ESCAPE FROM



Above: Brain (Harry Dean Stanton), Maggie (Adrienne Barbeau) and Snake (Kurt Russell) steal a car from the Duke's men in an attempt to save the President of the United States. Below: Director John Carpenter and producer Debra Hill.

The year is 1997 and Manhattan Island has been turned into a maximum security jail. The bridges to the island have been either sealed or are mined. The good guys are keeping the bad guys locked up in the biggest prison in the world.

The president of the USA is on a desperate flight to a meeting which will decide the fate of the world, with Russia and China on the brink of the apocalyptic confrontation. His plane is taken over by terrorists in mid-flight and is crashed into Manhattan Prison. Big problem. How to get the Prez out in time for the meeting.

This is the basic premise of John Carpenter's latest film and right away I'll say that it is his most assured work, full of the kind of touches one has come to expect from this most independent (outside of David Cronenberg) of film makers. However *Escape From New York* is also the most frustratingly disappointing of John Carpenter's features, but I'll get to that in a bit.

With the President down among the ruins of humanity the cops fly in their Dolby helicopters. They are met by a super-weirdo, Romero (Frank Doubleday), who presents them with one of the president's fingers and the news that the man is being held by the Duke of New York. Further instructions will follow.

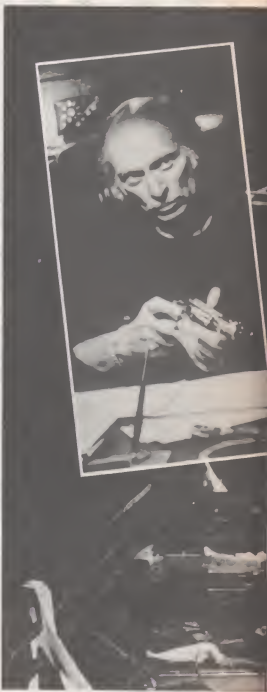
Police Commissioner Hauk, played by Lee Van Cleef in his best reptilian manner, remembers that Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) is on his way to Manhattan Prison. Snake is a heavy dude. Not only was he a hotshot pilot in the last big bang, he's also a black belt in karate, hasn't washed for about six years and wears an eye patch. Snake gets his name from a rather large cobra which is tattooed on his stomach. As this decoration grows up from the waist band of his combat pants it's likely that Snake has other outstanding attributes. But this is a AA certificate movie (and review) so we'll leave that there. He's also equipped with a delivery that reminded me of a young Marlon Brando—"Call me Ssssnake" he hisses several times.

Snake gets the job with the promise of a free pardon, but to make sure sure he stays in line a couple of explosive charges are implanted in his neck—by a character called Dr Cronenberg no less. He's got 20 hours to



get the Prez out, and if he doesn't then the mini bombs will go off, blowing Snake's arteries out of his neck. Pretty inventive stuff, thanks to the script of Carpenter and Nick Castle, who of course played The Shape in John's *Halloween*.

Enough of the plot, you all want something left for your money. *Escape* is like an outrageous comic strip, though finding a comparison to Snake Plissken in comicdom is a little difficult. Carpenter tells us just enough about this good apple gone bad to make us



Above left: Lee Van Cleef plays Hauk, Police Commissioner. Above right: Ernest Borgnine is Cabbie, an eccentric taxi driver who has kept his hack in working order. Above: The mined bridge that Snake and his companions must cross to get the President out of New York. Right: Snake (Kurt Russell) is given the antidote to the micro-explosives implanted in his neck by police surgeon, Dr Cronenberg.

like him enough to feel some kind of identification, though not in the same way as Indiana Jones in *Raiders*, for example. A more fitting comparison would be with Clint Eastwood's "Man With No Name" from the *Dollars* movies of the Sixties. A totally amoral hero. Just right for the bleak Eighties.

Carpenter has peopled *Escape* with some fascinating characters. There's Brain played by the excellent Harry Dean Stanton. All nervous energy, Brain has always lived on his wife and is obviously the smartest man in the

NEW YORK

Review by Phil Edwards



prison, living in the remains of the New York Public Library, an oil well pump casually installed in the massive apartment he shares with Maggie played by the delectable Adrienne Barbeau.

Isaac Hayes makes a pretty good job of the Duke of New York, at once threatening and somehow likeable. Duke drives around in an armoured Cadillac, fitted out with chandeliers for headlamps. Fun, but not really that much different from some of the outrageous autos one sees in New York today.

The President is played by Donald Pleasence, an odd bit of casting that really works. Poor old Donald is treated terribly. Beaten up, finger sliced off, used for target practice, dressed up in a long blond wig and generally humiliated. But he manages to come out at the end OK, in time to show himself as just another creepy Prez. But Snake has thought of this and his final retribution on the ungrateful man is complete. It's also one of the best gags in the movie.

Escape from New York looks terrific, thanks to the production design of Joe Alves. It's about time somebody recognised the talents of this artist. Alves was responsible for *Jaws* and, most spectacularly, *Close Encounters*. Aided by Carpenter's usual cinematographer Dean Cundey, Alves presents the ruins of Manhattan Island as a tribal wasteland.

The film is also a big special effects movie, although most of the spectacular effects were executed in a tiny area in Roger Corman's effects facility in California. There are several incredibly artificial model shots which despite—or because of—their very phoniness imbue the film with much of its atmosphere. The flight into New York by glider and the landing on top of the derelict Trade Towers is masterfully handled. A thrilling combination of computer graphics and model work.

As with all Carpenter films there are some well staged set pieces involving action and stunts. Once down in the human jungle, Snake meets all kinds of weirdos and gangs. Perhaps the most frightening are the *Crazies*—another tip of the hat to Romero. The *Crazies* live in the deserted subways and the sequence in which they emerge through the sewer covers and up through the floorboards of crumbling buildings—anybody who has suffered at the hands of *Chock Full O'Nuts* will get a laugh—is genuinely creepy.

Likewise, a gladiatorial battle in which a badly wounded Snake slugs it out with spiked baseball clubs with a mountain of men to the bloodthirsty cheers of Duke's gang is well staged, though if keeping the audience a trifle distant. The climax of that particular battle is nasty to be sure but once again a comic violence element is there to defuse it.

So what's disappointing about **Escape from New York**? I liked the film a lot. It demonstrates Carpenter's growing ability to handle increasingly bigger budgets and bigger casts. Like *The Fog* it shows that the director is in control of complicated effects sequences. It bodes well for Carpenter's next film, a remake of *Hawks! The Thing*. From all reports Billy Lancaster's script is tough, hard and terrifying. I can't wait for that one.

But there were times during **Escape** when I wanted to scream at the screen. The truth is that Carpenter, with this film, blows more opportunities to wind up suspense than he takes up. The sequence with the *Crazies* is, as I've already said, really quite frightening. However it ultimately goes nowhere. It builds and builds with hairbreadth escapes and stunts and ends with a totally defused pay off.

The same thing happens in the final chase sequence. All the bridges leading off the island are supposedly impassable, except for one for which Brain has a map showing the location of the mines. With the seconds ticking away for Snake the chase gets underway. Sure, mines go off and there is some heated screaming about heading left and right and people die. But somehow it just doesn't carry any suspense. You just don't care when people meet their bloody deaths—people that Carpenter has carefully built up into rounded, likeable characters.

Likewise the final confrontation between Snake and Duke. It should have been terrifying, real edge of the seat suspense. Of course you know that Snake will win, he's too interesting a character to die after so much



Top: *The President* (Donald Pleasence) takes care of *A-Number-One-The-Duke-of-New-York* (Isaac Hayes). Above: A portrait of the Duke's creepy right-hand-men, *Romero* (Frank Doubleday). Inset: *The Duke* with two of his bizarre followers.

hard work. The sequence just doesn't hang together. It's clumsily staged and badly edited.

As much as I liked the film it has given me a doubt about Carpenter's ability to write and direct endings for his films. The doubt started with *Halloween*. At the time the climax seemed suitable. In retrospect, I'm not sure. The doubt was compounded by *The Fog*. Like *Escape* that film just ran out of steam. The tacked-on ending showed through. The best parts of *The Fog* were at the beginning of the film. The sequence on the fishing boat held a claustrophobic horror as did the scene in which Adrienne Barbeau was attacked by the ghosts atop the lighthouse.

And so it is with *Escape From New York*.

The film just runs out of excitement. The opening is well-staged. Various set pieces are put together in a masterful fashion. Images, like the *Crazies* rising from the underground, the superb throwaway shot of a disembodied head stuck on a parking meter, the single flash of a figure in the supposedly-deserted Trade Centre, the somehow touching sequence of prisoners putting on a drag vaudeville show in the ruins of a theatre are all terrifically evocative of a desolate futureworld. It's almost wasted with the badly-staged last ten minutes of the film.

Do see *Escape From New York*. Carpenter is an important talent. It is a pleasurable if sometimes frustrating experience to watch that talent grow and mature. With *Escape* he

has almost thrown off the ghost of his inspiration Howard Hawks. There is little of Hawks in *Escape*, apart from one running gag. But there is also little of that cloying movie consciousness which so often intruded into Carpenter's films in the past.

Like David Cronenberg, Carpenter is an emerging artist. Their films have nothing in common other than that they are two people who fought in their own ways to make the type of film they wanted.

The Brood, not *Scanners*, was Cronenberg's breakthrough film. In the same way *Escape From New York* is John Carpenter's. Sixty per cent a perfectly realised film. It's my guess that *The Thing* will add to that.



Top left: The Crazies pose outside the "Choc Full o' Nuts" restaurant. Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) is trapped in the store when the Crazies erupt out of their sewer dwellings. Also trapped in the building is an unnamed female convict, played by Season Hubley, Russell's real-life wife (top right). Above: "Brain" Helman (Harry Dean Stanton) puts an end to the career of Romero (Frank Doubleday), the right hand man of the Duke of New York. The President of the United States (Donald Pleasence) looks on helplessly. Left: Director John Carpenter poses with the drag artists who are seen performing in the theatre where we are first introduced to Cabbie (Ernest Borgnine). Right: Some of the bizarre convicts who populate the caverns beneath the theatre.



EXCALIBUR

Late arrivals department: Far too late for *Starline* '75's coverage of John Boorman's *Excalibur* and only missing the *Excalibur* Poster Monthly (on sale now!) by a hairsbreadth came these superb designs by Anthony Pratt (production designer) and Bob Ringwood (artistic designer). We present a two-page spread on the Art of *Excalibur*.



Plugh: A knight on the back of a dragon. (Left) A dragon in the forest. (Right) A dragon in the forest.



Review by
Bill Warren

THE HAND



Top:
Michael
Caine plays
Jonathan Lans-
dale, the comic strip
artist who is gradually
becoming insane. Above:
Jonathan Lansdale battles with The
Hand in the barn. Left: Moments after
the accident in which he loses his hand. Lans-
dale is a bloodsoaked wreck. Below: The seldom-
seen title star of The Hand makes an appearance. This
appears to be one of the models built by Carlo Rambaldi.



Crawling hand movies are a rare breed, and rarely done well. The **Beast with Five Fingers** (1946) was probably the first and despite some story crudities and one of the silliest endings in movie history, it's still the best. Although the hand in question turned out to be the figment of Peter Lorre's fervid imagination, we were still treated to remarkably convincing scenes of the hand playing a piano, scuttling swiftly along the floor, and so forth. Crawling hands, in fact, almost always turn out to be someone's fantasy; they are rarely treated as being solidly real. **The Hand** is no exception.

Although it didn't form a major part of the story, a crawling hand with an eye on the back was featured in **Invasion of the Heli Creatures** (1957); **Invasion of the Saucer Men** in the US). The arm of a dead alien detaches itself and menaces the hero and heroine from the back seat of a police car in this tepid comedy.

The Crawling Hand of 1963 was a wretched little cheapie in which the action centered around Rod Lauren, possessed by evil thingies from outer space, rather than the crawling hand itself. That was the missing

arm of an astronaut, and it was eaten by a mob of starving cats at the end of the picture.

Amicus got fair mileage out of their crawling hand prop, which was first used in 1964's **Dr Terror's House of Horrors**. This time the (perhaps imaginary) hand was that of Michael Gough, an artist so wounded by waspish critic Christopher Lee's attacks that he commits suicide. The hand comes out of the grave to avenge him. The same rubbery prop turned up in **And Now the Screaming Starts** (1973), a convoluted ghost story starring Peter Cushing. But the arm in **Asylum** (1972) that grabbed Richard Todd was a new prop.

There have undoubtedly been some crawling hands on television. For example, **Return of the Sorcerer**, an episode of **Night Gallery**, had all parts of a body—all the non-censorable parts—slowly assembling.

Oliver Stone's **The Hand** is the first crawling hand movie in some time, but adds no laurels to this not-very-honourable subgenre of fantasy. The hand itself is rarely seen, and turns out to be only the figment of mad artist Michael Caine's imagination—shades of

Peter Lorre—although there's little doubt of that throughout the picture. But then again...

Oliver Stone wrote the script for **Midnight Express**, and so overdid it that if Alan Parker's direction of the movie hadn't matched the excesses of the script, it would have seemed outrageous and ludicrous. He managed to win the Oscar for the script. Stone's earlier directorial effort, **Seizure**, is also overheated and has an endlessly complicated script, although it does feature Martine Beswick.

Stone wrote and directed **The Hand**, and the writing is as overwrought as ever; people generally shout. But this time he's backed off on the direction, and his style is mostly so bland and colourless, showing such a fear of taking chances, that the underthought script is left naked. **The Hand** is more a demonstration of Stone's lack of awareness as to just what his story—from the novel **The Lizard's Tail** by Marc Brandel—actually is about than anything else.

Caine plays Jonathan Lansdale, a comic strip writer/artist (art by Barry Windsor-Smith). It's typical of Stone that the comic strip shown in the movie has only one

Below: After Lansdale's accident, artwork for the Mandro comic strip is provided by Maddow (Charles Fleischer). However the artwork is mysteriously defaced, to the annoyance of Lansdale's agent, Karen Wagner (Rosemary Murphy). Far right: After being hauled away for several murders, Lansdale is examined by a psychiatrist (Viveca Lindfors). Bottom: Before his accident Jonathan Lansdale (Michael Caine) is a successful comic strip artist, his character, a barbarian called Mandro, a success. The art for the film was provided by ex-Marvel Conan artist Barry Windsor-Smith.



direct counterpart, *Conan*, and Stone was familiar with that because he had worked on a script for the Milius-De Laurentis production of the Robert E. Howard adventure. At one point, someone tells Lansdale that his strip has the classic, mythic qualities of "Peanuts" and "Pogo", not because there is any conceivable comparison, but because those are almost certainly the only two comic strips Stone is sure are "approved" of by intelligent people. His adventure strip is more like "Prince Valiant", but it's possible that title only makes Stone think of Robert Wagner with long hair.

While arguing with his adulterous wife (*Andrea Marcovicci*), Lansdale loses his right hand in a car accident, which is so clumsily staged that it's difficult to understand what happened. Later, he comes back to the scene

of the accident looking for his missing right hand; as he prowls around in the weeds, we see him from the point of view of the hand (it grew eyes?), but he can't find it. This is one of Stone's confusing if not false clues.

Lansdale begins to imagine the hand taking revenge on those he thinks of as having wronged him. The film carefully shows that all these early attacks are clearly fantasies of Lansdale's eroding sanity. Some are even in black and white, presumably to emphasize this, but other shots of the crawling hand are in color. Yet the last scene, in which the hand attacks Viveca Lindfors while Caine is strapped in a chair, clearly proves that the hand is real, crawling about on its own.

This kind of double vision infuses the entire movie. We are supposed to perceive Lansdale as a brutal tyrant, and thus his wife

is right to want to leave him. At least the dialogue *almost* indicates this. But Stone's direction makes the wife seem so self-centred, phony and arrogant that she is distinctly unsympathetic. On the other—ahem—hand, Caine's artist seems to us to be a man badly used by an unloving wife. His anger seems justified, albeit overstated.

When Lansdale can't draw his comic strip any more—no hand, after all—another artist is brought in. I suspect we are intended to think that this new artist (*Charles Fleischer*) will bring fresh insights to the strip, but his ideas sound trendy and specious; the scenes play as if he's an insolent swine intent on destroying Lansdale's life work. Stone's anger is apparent throughout the film, but it also seems directed about equally at everyone. Caine is (eventually) a homicidal



Above: Jonathan Lansdale (Michael Caine) takes a job teaching art in California following the accident and becomes interested in student Stella (Annie McEnroe). Below: Andrea Marcovicci is Anna, Lansdale's adulterous wife. Right: Lansdale searches the barn for his rebellious hand unaware that it is sneaking up behind him. Opposite above: Lansdale's daughter (Mara Hobel) is intrigued by her father's mechanical hand. Opposite below left: Lansdale comes face-to-palm with his missing hand. The hand used for this shot belongs, in reality, to Clark Paylow, production manager and executive producer of the film. Opposite below right: Oliver Stone, writer/director of *The Hand*. He also appears in the film as a down and out...



maniac, but he is also the most sympathetically treated character.

Lansdale gets a job in California as a teacher, and is quickly seduced by a sexy young student (*Annie McEnroe*). But when she seems to become interested in another man, Lansdale becomes insanely jealous, and the hand kills her. We never knew that he cared about her at all, except as a bed partner.

It's like a psychological joke: everything Stone thinks he is telling us (according to interviews) is the opposite of what he's actually telling us. The film is confused because the director is.

The Hand doesn't work as a psychological thriller, because we are never given any idea what makes Caine's mind tick or crumble. It doesn't work as a horror movie because every shock scene is heavily telegraphed and

then fails to deliver the goods. The only scene that makes audiences jump is when a cat crashes through a window, but the effect is destroyed because there's no conceivable explanation for a cat to do such an un-cat-like thing.

If the hand is real, we are given no clues as to why it behaves the way it does. It attacks an obnoxious bum (Stone himself), apparently only because the bum has a missing hand, like Lansdale himself. The hand seems to be on the verge of menacing Lansdale's daughter (*Mara Hobel*), the one person in the film he clearly loves, but it doesn't attack the faddish lover of the wife. Later in the story, its goals seem more clear: it kills people he thinks endanger or betray him (we later see memory-flashes showing Lansdale committing the crimes himself). But then the

hand attacks Lansdale himself. Why?

Whether it's acting on his behalf, or is only in his mind, there's no reason for it to attack him except to assuage his guilt. Which doesn't "read" strongly enough.

King Baggott's photography is competent but uninteresting. Michael Riva's production design is okay, light and airy at the beginning, dark and enclosed at the end, indicating the state of Caine's mind. The crawling hand is credited to Carlo Rambaldi, but insiders tell me his hands were largely unusable (in fact, the black and white scenes are reportedly there only to hide the totally inadequate colouration of Rambaldi's hands). I'm told by people in a position to know that the hand in the movie is almost always that of Clark Paylow, the production manager and executive producer.



The third film in
The Omen trilogy
is finally with us.
Alan Jones asks,
was it worth the wait?

The *Final Conflict* is the last chapter in *The Omen* trilogy and it is a pity to have to report that the series ends with a lack-lustre whimper, not the bang as anticipated by the two previous films.

The *Omen*, as we all know, was the surprise box-office hit of 1976. It was a serviceable thriller with some very good special effects, in particular David Warner's decapitation, the main reason why the film was promoted by the extensive word-of-mouth needed to elevate it into the megabuck stratosphere. Personally speaking, I didn't think Richard Donner was able to maintain the level of menace in between all the spectacular set pieces, which is why I prefer the first sequel *Damien: Omen II*. Although that too never lost the feeling that as soon as a character was introduced, they would be despatched almost immediately I didn't feel the ingenious death scenes were the whole movie's *raison d'être*. *Damien: Omen II* is overdue for reappraisal—I suspect it's the best of three due to Mike Hodge's contribution even though he was replaced by director Don Taylor and had his script rewritten.

The *Final Conflict* begins 20 years after *Damien: Omen II*'s conclusion. The seven daggers of Meggido are retrieved from the ruins of the Thorn Museum in Chicago and find their way into the hands of Father De Carlo (*Rossano Brazzi*), at the Subiaco Monastery in Northern Italy. Damien Thorn (*Sam Neill*), is now 33 years old and the influential head of Thorn Industries. He realises that the biblical prophecy of Christ's Second Coming is about to come true. "... and the Beast shall reign one hundred score and thirty days and nights... out of the angel isle he shall bring forth a deliverer who shall battle with the beast..." (*Book of Hebrew. The Apocrypha*). Well, for the "angel isle" read Britain, and Damien realises he has to get himself named as American Ambassador to Great Britain in order to keep a close watch on the impending birth.

In the film's first major and best 'stunt death', we see him engineer his predecessor's fate. The Ambassador looks into the eyes of a demonic hound, and rigs a pistol to blow off his head as the approaching members of the press open his door for a conference. It is a sequence that outdoes *Scanners*. Having taken over office, Damien thinks he is safe from detection, but Father De Carlo and seven trusted monks have already left for London in the dedicated pursuit of destroying him and preserving the world for the Second Coming.

The basic concept for *The Final Conflict* is excellent—so what went wrong? The fault lies with the script and the direction. Andrew Birkin was an inspired choice to write the script (he wrote tv's *The Lost Boys* and Jacques Demy's *The Pied Piper*), obviously producer Harvey Bernhard was impressed enough to make him associate producer, but where is the chilling omnipresent view of evil as promised? I know of one instance where 20th Century-Fox objected to the script on the grounds of religious bad taste, so perhaps this wasn't the isolated example I was led to believe, because what was left is at times downright laughable, convoluted and full of holes.



Final Conflict



A selection of scenes from *The Final Conflict*, in which Damien Thorn gets his comeuppance... or does he?

Take for example the way the seven monks botch their efforts to destroy Damien. No one would want, or expect, unbelievable cowed James Bond clones, but for such important work as annihilating the Antichrist surely better recruits would have been assembled rather than this inept bunch?

The direction by Graham Baker, who comes from the same background as Ridley Scott, is perfunctory to say the least. As the script barely generates any suspense at all it was probably to salvage it the way a hardened professional would do. The sequence where one of the monks (*Marc Boyle*) falls off an unsteady catwalk in a tv studio where Damien is taping an interview, and becomes a human torch is a case in point. It is unconvincingly staged, confusing and old-fashioned. It should have been a high point in the movie. Another miscalculation is the ponderous and boring fox hunt, which is just an excuse to show how Damien symbolically 'bloodes' tv interviewer Kate Reynolds's (*Lisa Harrow*), son Peter (*Barnaby Holm*) with the unholy doctrine. That's the problem all the way through *The Final Conflict*, lengthy exposition that takes the story absolutely nowhere.

The film isn't all bad, of course. There is Sam Neill's remarkably understated performance as Damien. Neill portrays him with a boyish maturity and a subtle menace that adds a depth missing from other facets of the film. His battle cry of "Slay the Nazarene", when he sends out his minions to kill all the newly born male offspring, during his version of the Sermon on the Mount is chillingly impressive indeed, but as mentioned above, this is another aspect of the story that surprisingly becomes redundant in the long run. There is also the asset of luminous photography by Robert Paynter and Phil Meheux that perks the atmosphere up enormously.

However, calling the film *The Final Conflict* implies we will see just that—a final conflict. I don't think I'm spoiling anything for anybody when I reveal that it fails to materialise and all you can see is Damien stabbed in the back. Yes, that's right, stabbed in the back... the culmination of a series that looked like it would be as interesting, albeit for obviously different reasons, as the *Planet of the Apes* sagal.

The Omen and Damien: *Omen II* paved the way for an exciting and thrilling climax to the trilogy and it has been blown by this comical, misguided and ludicrous conclusion. The disappointment is all the more greatly felt because the potential was there.

The Final Conflict (1981)

Sam Neill (as Damien), Rossano Brazzi (De Carlo), Don Gordon (Dean), Lisa Harrow (Kate Reynolds), Barnaby Holm (Peter), Mason Adams (President), Robert Arden (American Ambassador), Tommy Duggan (Brother Matteus), Leueen Wiltoungby (Barbara), Louis Mahoney (Brother Paulo), Marc Boyle (Brother Benito), Richard Oldfield (Brother Simeon), Miles Kirek (Brother Martin), Tony Vogel (Brother Antonio), Arwen Holm (Carol), Hugh Moxey (Manservant), William Fox, John Baskomb (Diplomats), Norman Bird (Dr Philmore), Marc Smith (Press Officer), Arnold Diamond (Astronomer), Eric Richard (Astronomer's Assistant), Richard Williams (Vicer), Stephen Turner (Stipwell), Al Matthews (Workman), Larry Matryn, Frank Coda, Harry Littlewood (Orators).

Directed by Graham Baker, Screenplay by Andrew Birkin, Music by Jerry Goldsmith, Production designed by Herbert Westbrook, Edited by Alan Strachan, Makeup by Freddie Williamson, Special Effects supervisor Ian Wingrove, Executive producer Richard Donner, Produced by Harvey Bernhard, Harvey Bernhard.

FORBIDDEN PLANET

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The Blake's 7 Interview

GLYNIS BARBER



On September 24th, the BBC will air the first episode in the fourth season of the popular science fiction/adventure series, *Blake's 7*. This first episode, *Rescue*, will mark some major changes to the show. The Liberator, destroyed at the end of the last series, will be replaced with a new ship. The crew will change their uniforms and weaponry and one member of the team is to be killed off. The replacement is a lady gunslinger by the name of Soolin, played by Glynis Barber. Alan Murdoch went along to the BBC Rehearsal Rooms where Miss Barber was working on the seventh episode of *Blake's 7* and returned with the following interview.

Starburst: I'm told you did a brief stint in theatre before becoming involved in tv...

Glynis Barber: Oh no, I haven't been totally involved in television. Actually, I have gone from medium to medium. I've done a bit of theatre, a bit of television and a bit of filming.

Well, what have you done in theatre?

I was in *Once in a Lifetime*, with the RSC (Royal Shakespeare Company) last year. I did six months in that. I was in *The Vaudeville in A Murder is Announced*. After this season of *Blake's 7* is over I wouldn't mind doing some theatre again. I do love the theatre and I miss it.

And your film work?

I did something a few months ago in the Philippines for an independent American producer. It was the same location as they used for *Apocalypse Now*.

What's the film about?

It's called *Greed*. It's got lots of Hollywood actors. Stuart Whitman is in it. The film is an adventure story about people setting off into the jungle, trying to recover gold that was lost during the Second World War. They're all getting killed off and nobody knows who's doing it.

What sort of character do you play?

Well, she's not really necessary to the story. They just wanted a woman in there. In fact, Britt Ekland was going to play the part. One of the backers pulled out and they had to find someone else. So they found me. I went along one afternoon and they said "can you fly to the Philippines tomorrow?" Oh all right, if you insist! I haven't actually seen it yet. It hasn't been shown. They're still editing and dubbing. In fact I have to do some work on it next week. The very first film I did was a horror film called *Terror*. I made it three years ago. It was made on a very small budget but it was very well done. It was recently shown in London.

Who else was in it?

James Aubrey.

And *Blake's 7* is your first major television series part? Yes, the first television series I've ever done.

But you've done television before?

Yes. I haven't actually done that much on television. Some of my television has been for other countries and the results have never been seen here. I did the Sherlock Holmes series—not the whole series, two episodes—in Warsaw, which was a Polish American production. They haven't sold it here. They were quite nice parts. Two different characters actually, and they asked me back in the next series. It was really weird.

They put a wig on you?

No, they didn't. They said, 'the audience will love it if they recognise you'. I've never come across that before...

I also did the *History of Mr Polly*—

With Barry Letts? (the producer of the Sunday Serials for BBC)

Yes, that's right. I played Christabella, but I was totally unrecognisable because I had a long red wig on. I was a sort of sixteen year old schoolgirl. I did an episode of *The Sandbaggers*.

A good show.

Yes, a terrific show. I was impressed with that. But my very first television job was, in fact, *Blake's 7*! I had just left drama school, had one theatre job and got my Equity card. It was an episode of *Blake's 7* in the first series.

I won't even try to guess what part it was...

It was a mutoid

What's a mutoid?

Well, do you remember Stephen Grief? He was the baddy [Travis]. I was one of his Mutoids. A sort of chief Mutoid. I had to say things like 'spacship approaching' and I had to murder various people. The thing about these mutoids was that they would do anything he said and were totally emotionless. *That's interesting. I thought that the Soolin is emotionless in a ruthless kind of way.*

The characters are not linked at all. They'd almost forgotten I'd played that part. Soolin is hard and she's tough but I don't think she's emotionless at all. Not at all. She'll defend herself. She's never heard of them. She's very quick on the draw. She knows how to defend herself. She would kill if anyone threatened to hurt her in any way. She's obviously had a tough beginning. But I don't think she's a cold killer.

The interesting aspect of the character is why she's tough and ruthless. Has anyone told you why...?

No...

So you just have to bluff that for yourself?

Absolutely. You're left totally to your own devices. You think there's going to be somebody to say 'I think she'd play it like this' but you have different directors on every script who are not involved in the whole series. They just come in for one episode. But it is difficult to get into the character. If you saw episode one I didn't have much in it. I had a lot less in episode two. In episode two I come in on the last page and I have about two lines. And it's very difficult to establish a character—especially when you're coming in as one of the regulars on such a little. The background story gave her, she is the sort of character who's interesting.

In episode one, there wasn't background. She was just there in the base.

Quite. And no more... ever explained. It was explained to me when I began. They said 'this is her background'. They gave me a little typed sheet which said she comes from this planet, her parents were murdered, she avenged their death and all that, but that was it. I mean, how the audience will know all that I don't know. Dorian says something, but not much. He just mentions that Soolin's parents were killed.

So the audience has to pick things up as they go along. Perhaps in episode four is reference back?

No they haven't mentioned her background again. It's a very definite character, being such a toughie.

A sort of female Clint Eastwood?

Yes sort of, sort of. I don't know, I'm still confused. Because she comes in such a little in the first two episodes then a bit more in three than more so in four and five. Even more in six. Now we're doing seven and I have a lot more to do in that. But it has been a very gradual introduction. I couldn't just come straight away. It's very difficult to establish a character a three-dimensional character and you've just got the odd line. And obviously in something like *Blake's 7* they're not great character lines anyway. I mean they're action lines, aren't they? Not something you can build great character on. It's very difficult to make a solid impression on such little. I have found it difficult. I will be surprised as anyone when I finally see the show. I'm not absolutely sure how it's going to come across.

I think that may be due to the format of the show. You have five human characters all sharing the limelight plus the intrusion of the occasional computer, so you're fighting against all of the and all the pyrotechnics of the special effects.

Yes. But they did introduce her very slowly. I think they wanted to see how I would fit in with the others. If I'd jarred with the others and I'd been introduced very suddenly it could have destroyed the series, I suppose.

How does the Soolin character mesh with the others?

I noticed in the first script that there was friction between her and Avon. In the first episode I'm not one of the Seven. In episode two I become one of them on the very last page. I force them to take me with them. In episode three it's as though I've always been there. There's more reference to how I joined them... and I'm just one of them. And of course there's friction... there always is on *Blake's 7*... but no more between me

and the group than between any of the others. *Donan is killed off in the first episode. But does anyone ever discover who built the base and all the weapons?*

Oh, Dorian built that place. He's been living there for two hundred years. People having been moving in and out of there all that time. After two hundred years he's a very clever man.

Talking to Paul [Darrow] earlier he told me that nobody has seen the final script of this series.

We've seen the first twelve but not the last.

If they do another series, are you going to want to be involved?

I don't know. It's impossible to say. We're only half way through this series. It depends on a lot of things. I honestly don't know.

There's always a conflict between the security of a regular series and the danger of being typecast.

Well, it's not really very definite typing really, is it? There's only so many parts you can play like that, an intergalactic gunfighter.

But Soolin is more of a hard-nosed lady

But a hard-nosed lady can be found in all kinds of media, in all kinds of plays. That's only one trait in a very complicated human personality. You can never be pinned to one trait. You can in something like *Blake's 7* but in most plays you can't. You're either

young innocent girl or girl in mid-twenties who terribly wealthy or whatever, but you can't be pinned to a trait like being strong-willed or dangerous, it's too elusive, do you know what I mean?

So it doesn't worry you?

No, it doesn't. Also I've always been cast as a juvenile up till now. I've always been the ingenue. And I'm delighted to get a part where I play my own age. I've always played—on stage and on television—the young innocent and there comes a point in your career where you've got to get out of that. It's very difficult moving from one stage to another and I know I had that transition to make. Young actresses with experience are in smaller numbers than when you get into the next stage, which is the actress from mid-twenties to mid-thirties, or even late thirties, the leading actress type. That's where most of the actresses are and that's where the competition really begins. I knew I had to change to that stage. I was a bit worried about it. But I think *Blake's 7* is a good beginning. Soolin is not an ingenue or juvenile at all. I would be nervous about being type in glamorous parts. But as it turned out, it's not really glamorous at all. We have very comfortable costumes. We're not made to look amazingly beautiful or anything. It's all very practical and down-to-Earth. I don't feel like a bit of cheesecake. I wouldn't like it if I did.





TALES FROM

"Bucacy Bucacy in the Friendly Forest" hardly earns like a title one would associate with William M. Gaines, the man who would single-handedly catapult the comic world into sensationalist horror in the 1950s, but it was one of the titles Gaines found he had inherited when his father died in a boating accident in 1947. The business, Educational Comics, was 100,000 dollars in the red. After playing at executive for the first couple of months, Gaines knew he would have to do something drastic to inject some excitement into the company to make it a going concern once again. So with artist Al Feldstein, love, crime and western stories started appearing on the agenda with titles like "Dime-a-Dance Hostess" and "I Had Two Husbands". But Gaines' real love was horror. He had grown up watching 30's classics like *Dracula*, *Dr X* and *Mystery of the Wax Museum* and was a great fan of radio serials like *The Witch's Tale*, so he tried inserting a horror story as a single feature in one of the crime magazines. The reader response was so enthusiastic that Gaines, convinced they were onto something big, phased out all the old comic book titles and in early 1950 introduced *The Crypt of Terror* and *The Vault of Horror* and under the E.C. banner—"Entertaining Comics—A New Trend in comic books". Their success was instantaneous and E.C. sales figures went through the roof. Quickly other new titles emerged, *The Hound of Fear*, "Shock Suspense Stories", "Weird Science" and "Weird Fantasy". Each of the horror comics had a totally implausible tale, usually foul play and subsequent retribution, and always offered a gut-wrenching twist, told and drawn in the most vivid style. Stories soon became harder to find and a lot were repeated with a few telling differences but it didn't matter to comic book aficionados as they were entranced more by the visuals, the story playing second fiddle to the comic artist as star. Gaines openly encouraged this by giving full page biographies on the hitherto unknown names of Feldstein, Graham Ingels (who would often sign his work "Ghastly"), Johnny Craig and Jack Davies. Within a year E.C.'s financial problems had been wiped out but the next few years brought a different set of problems. A hundred imitators had hit the newstands and there was a popular growing unease, compounded by Dr Frederic Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent*, that the comics were causing the brutalisation of youth and juvenile delinquency. It was 1953 and America was in the grip of the repressive McCarthy era. More and more letters of condemnation were arriving at E.C. headquarters. Church magazines and P.T.A. meetings openly attacked the comics saying they were depraved and corrupt. The pressure groups finally got what they wanted when it was decided there should be a Senate investigation into the matter, but although the hearings themselves brought forth no legislation, publishers quickly rallied round to atone for their sins and formed the Comic Magazines Association of America, who on September 16th 1954 named Judge Charles F. Murphy as the man with full authorisation to ban all horror comics. Murphy laid out a code which all comic books had to abide by otherwise they would not receive the Seal of Approval. Without this Seal, no wholesaler or newstand would touch them. E.C. comics were dead. Gaines went on to nurture the very successful *Mad* magazine, but all the



writer E.C. Sawyer had were fond of memorializing such classic vignettes as "Foul Play", "Last of the Meek" and "Midnight Mass".

In the mid 60s, Ballantine books in the U.S. released four collections of the E.C. comics, two of which were *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Vault of Horror*. It was these stories that caught the eye of Milton Subotsky, the creative side of the Amicus films partnership with Max J. Rosenberg. Subotsky was always looking for viable properties and Amicus had had great success with *Dr Terror's House of Horrors* and *Torture Garden*, two films that utilised Subotsky's idea—the multi-story format—and in the E.C. books he could see an ideal source of material for a film.

"Family enough," says Subotsky, "I didn't know of the comics in the 50s. The first time I ever came across them was in the Ballantine reprints. As soon as I read them I asked Max to see if the rights were available and if there were any other stories I could choose from. Max sent me a whole bunch of photostats and one of them I chose the five stories I thought would lend themselves most effectively to a cinematic retelling. Max apparently had a lot of problems as Gaines didn't want to give up the rights. I only found out years later that Max had agreed to script consultations with Gaines and he was furious that he had never been given script approval. I never knew that

THE CRYPT



Far left: The skull-faced motorcyclist who pursues Ralph Jason (Richard Greene) shortly before he dies of a heart attack behind the wheel of his car. From the story *Wish You Were Here*. Left: Peter Cushing plays Arthur Grimsdyke, from the story *Poetic Justice*, who returns from the dead to wreak vengeance on his tormentors. Right: A sequence from the tale *All Through the House*, starring Joan Collins as Joanne Clayton and Chloe Franks as her daughter Carol who lets an escaped lunatic (disguised as Santa Claus) into the house.







A scene from the "Blind Alleys" story. George Carter (Patrick Magee) and his blind colleagues, decide to take their revenge upon William Rogers (Nigel Patrick), the inhuman supervisor of the blind people.

I don't think he can say I violated any of the stories at all, some things had to be done differently but for the most part nothing was changed."

Subotsky wrote the script and invented the framework link of the Crypt-Keeper who appears to be warning five unsuspecting victims who have stumbled accidentally into his lair. In fact he is telling them why they have been condemned to a hellish eternity. Charles W. Fries of the newly formed Metromedia company backed the project with 500,000 dollars and *Tales from the Crypt* went before the cameras in 1971, with director Freddie Francis helming the intensive six week shoot. Francis was chosen for two reasons, he had directed some of Amicus' past successes like *The Skull* and because Subotsky considers him to be one of the most spectacular cameramen. "He sets up shots that my wife calls 'edible technicolor'. He gets angles, movements and shots that make the pictures look wonderful."

"Subotsky gave Francis the comics at one stage just to show him the difference between them and the script, and to see if Francis could come up with any better ideas. However some of the comic frames were so perfect cinematically that it became obvious that they would just have to be shot without changing a thing. In this way the comics became storyboards and the perfect reference for E.C. fans to quell any possible criticism! Subotsky was so adamant about the visual quality of the film that there is a prologue in the script which states, "*Tales from the Crypt* is a film which is almost entirely visual. Dialogue has been kept to the minimum needed to make the situation clear.

It is therefore important in reading this script to pay particular attention to the descriptions of visual action."

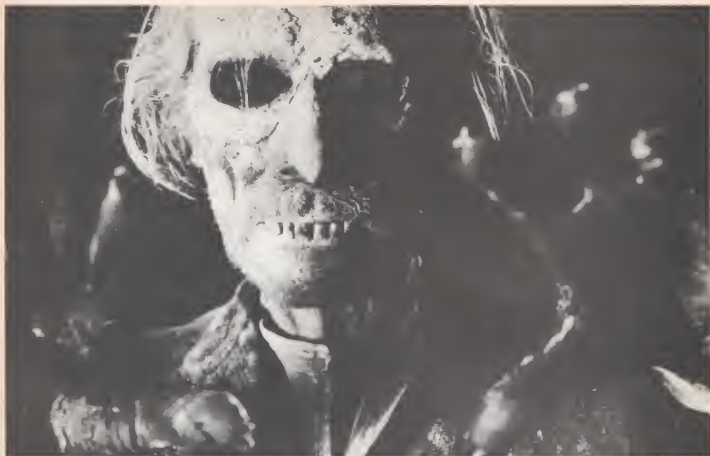
Tales from the Crypt begins with a group of visitors on a guided tour of some historical catacombs. Suddenly one of the visitors stumbles and the four visitors who are behind him help him as best they can, when all five realise they are lost. After deciding which corridor to go down they come across a stone door which opens automatically and they find themselves in a cavernous room. A monk-like figure enters and in turn manages to find out where each of them were on their way to before they had the compulsion to stop and go into the catacombs.

Joanne Clayton (Joan Collins) is the first to tell her story. Based on "All Through the House" (from *Vault of Horror* 35, illustrated by Johnny Craig) it tells how she beats her husband to death on Christmas Eve to claim on his insurance policy. After the grisly murder, a newsflash comes over the radio that a homicidal maniac has escaped from a nearby lunatic asylum dressed as Santa Claus. Checking to see everything is locked up and safe she goes to the front gates where the maniac makes his first memorable appearance trying to grab her. Back indoors about to phone the police, she finds her young daughter missing. Frantic with worry she finds out too late that, full of the Christmas spirit, her daughter Carol (*Chloe Franks*), has let in Santa Claus and the only present she will receive is one of strangulation! It was during the filming of this sequence that Milton Subotsky got his chance to direct some second unit work. The scene in which Joan Collins washes her

husband's blood from her hands was his responsibility when filming got a little behind schedule and they needed this important establishing shot. This scene, where the blood was real, (Amicus always used uncoagulated pig's blood in their films) led one critic to write some amazing in-depth analysis and praise of Freddie Francis' direction, an irony that still amuses Subotsky to this day.

The second story was Carl Maitland's (*Ian Hendry*) based on "Reflection of Death", (from *Tales from the Crypt* 23 illustrated by Al Feldstein). In this, the shortest of the *Tales*, Maitland and his girlfriend, Susan (*Angie Grant*), go joyriding in his car. While she drives, he dozes off and has a terrible nightmare. Moments later their car hurtles over an incline and crashes. Time passes and Maitland struggles through the countryside in a daze. After scaring a tramp for reasons he can't fathom, he arrives home and terrifies his wife. Completely bewildered he goes on to find Susan at her apartment. Now blind, Susan can't believe he survived the crash which happened nearly two years ago! In panic Maitland's gloved hand touches a mirror—in it is the reflection of a rotting corpse—his reflection! Maitland suddenly wakes up from his nightmare and finds himself in the car still riding with Susan. Moments later their car hurtles over an incline... The recurring nightmare continues.

The third story, starring Peter Cushing as Grimsdyke in "Poetic Justice", (from *The Haunt of Fear* 12 illustrated by Graham Ingels), is the one devotees of the film hold in the highest regard. Cushing, cast against type, gave one of the best performances of his



Above: *The revenge of Arthur Grimsdyke. After the cruel tricks played on him by the Elliotts (Robin Phillips and David Markham), Arthur Grimsdyke (Peter Cushing) rises from the grave to extract retribution. Above right: Joanne Clayton (Joan Collins) is menaced by the escaped lunatic after murdering her husband in the story "All Through the House". Below: The grisly denouement of the tale "Wish you Were Here". Enid (Barbara Murrey) wishes her dead husband back to life forever, unaware that his veins have been filled with embalming fluid prior to burial...*

career as the kindly old dog lover whose evil neighbours, the Elliotts, (*Robin Phillips and David Markham*) conspire to own his property. They begin a smear campaign that gets his dogs destroyed and his retirement pension lost. The final straw is the cruel trick of sending him Valentine cards filled with hateful messages that finally breaks his heart and he hangs himself. But next Valentine's Day he rises from the grave and Edward Elliott discovers his son James' body, with his heart wrapped up in a grisly Valentine scroll written in blood!

Subotsky was afraid to ask Peter Cushing if he would play the part of Grimsdyke as it concerned a man who communicates with his dead wife, and it was just after Cushing's own wife had died. But as it turned out it was the part he wanted to play more-or-less for that reason alone. As Cushing remembers it, "When the script was sent to me, they wanted me to play the part that Richard Greene eventually played in the segment of the film based on *The Monkey's Paw*. I didn't like the part... I didn't believe in it, but I wanted to work and I wanted to be in the picture, so I said to my agent, 'What about this little old man?' which in the script was literally nothing. He didn't even have lines to say. The story as written was about the young man (*James Elliott*)... the villain. So when Milton Subotsky heard that was part I wanted to play, he said, 'Of course, let him have it', and got it. So then I had to get together with Freddie Francis and virtually all of that part was adlibbed." The first scene Cushing shot was the scene where he emerges out of the grave, the last one in the segment. When he looked at the tombstone inscription it said, 'Husband of Mary Grimsdyke' and he wondered if there was any way this could be changed to his own wife's name, Helen. This, and the use of Cushing's real wife's photo in the ouija board scenes, Subotsky was more

than happy to comply with, and Cushing feels this is the reason why his character portrayal was so successful. Another reason for the success of this particular episode is Roy Ashton's make-up. At first the idea was the use a stand-in for Cushing painted grey, but as that didn't appeal to either men, between them they devised a make-up in one hour. Structures were made from laminated paper to suggest the severe wasting of the features and the eye sockets were covered with an opaque black material that wouldn't register on film. A slight beard combined with prominent discoloured teeth and thinning hair completed the desired effect. Instead of the grey planned, Ashton covered Cushing in a greenish paint that enhanced the whole effect. It was while filming this scene that a spider conveniently walked down the gravestone and had to be returned for subsequent shots due to continuity requirements.

The fourth story was based on "Wish You Were Here", (from *The Haunt of Fear* 22 illustrated out by Graham Ingels). As Cushing pointed out the tale itself was a version of the famous story *The Monkey's Paw* which is actually referred to in the story itself concerning a bankrupt Ralph Jason (*Richard Greene*), who learns that one of the many rare antiques he owns is a strange Oriental Idol that can grant three wishes. Wishing for wealth, the family lawyer immediately telephones to ask Ralph to meet him immediately. On his way, Ralph dies leaving his wife, Enid (*Barbara Murray*), a huge insurance. All she wants however, is her husband alive and carefully phrasing her wish she asks that her husband be brought back as he was *before the accident*. (She had learnt of 'The Monkey's Paw' syndrome that returned a corpse to life in a mutilated form). Ralph arrives in a coffin, still dead—His death had been from a heart attack. Now with one

wish remaining, Enid asks that he come to life forever. Ralph stirs in his coffin, immortal but in painful agony as his veins and arteries are filled with embalming fluid! In desperation Enid hacks at him with a meat cleaver to end his torment but his severed hand and arteries still keep moving...

Condemned as the sickest Tale of the lot, this segment was also the hardest to edit and suffered from censorship. As Subotsky recalls, "I think this segment is the worst made. We had a terrible time editing that story. You may wonder why we keep cutting to the statue all the time through it? The simple reason is that Freddie filmed that all





over the set, in one shot they would be in the corner of the room, in another, over the other side. So we kept cutting to the statue and added footsteps. The story wasn't shot as scripted and it didn't really make a lot of sense. The one shot the censor objected to, was the scene of his severed arteries moving about. Peter Cushing hated that scene too, so we took it out. I don't think the story lost anything because of that though."

The last, and longest story was "Blind Alleys", (from *Tales from the Crypt* 46 illustrated by George Evans). A blind men's home is taken over by a callous and unjust director, William Rogers (*Nigel Patrick*) who

starts making drastic economy cuts in the inmates lifestyles, but not his own. When one of his inmates dies of pneumonia, the others, led by George Carter, (*Patrick Magee*), imprison Rogers and his beloved dog in separate basement cells without food for two days. During that time they construct a labyrinth impregnated by thousands of razor blades, and it is through this that Rogers finds himself crawling to escape his hunger-crazed mastiff—in the dark! *Tales of the Crypt* ends with the five victims hypnotised by the Crypt-Keeper (*Sir Ralph Richardson*) into throwing themselves into a molten fiery pit. In true Amicus fashion, he then turns to the audience and says, "Who's next? Perhaps... You?"

(Just for the record the original order of the stories in the script were "Reflection of Death", "All Through the House", "Poetic Justice", "Blind Alleys", "Wish you were Here").

Ralph Richardson was only contracted for two days and when Subotsky found out that nothing had been shot on the first of the two days, he nearly had an apoplectic fit. "We were talking about big salaries for those days as all his scenes involved the other stars as well. The first day, Richardson took over completely from Freddie and told the other actors what to do and rehearsed the whole time. However, the next day everybody knew exactly where to stand and what their lines were then it was boom, boom, boom... It was incredible that all those set-ups were filmed in one day."

The completed film had a "World Screamer" on March 7th 1972 in New York and it was promoted with the gimmick that anyone who screamed their way into the theatre got a free ticket. ABC TV covered this attention grabbing event which meant maximum exposure for the film, and sure enough, *Tales from the Crypt* managed to gross several million dollars in a few weeks,

and at one stage even managed to rival *The Godfather's* takings. Quite why this happened is a mystery to Milton Subotsky who puts it down to it being the right film at the right time, similar to the recent *Friday the 13th* phenomenon. It really isn't the best Amicus film and the reviews were very mixed, but it managed to hit more targets than it missed and William M. Gaines for one was reasonably impressed. He said, "I thought it was a good movie and I thought it could have been a lot better. As a complete entity, I thought it was a very fine job. These were professional movie makers and they did a great job photographically, the colour, the effects, the acting, the sets were all first rate. The photography illuminated the stories in appropriate bloody crimson and cadaverous grays."

The film was so successful that Metromedia required a sequel. *The Vault of Horror* (1972) bombed dismally and yet it had all the same ingredients of *Tales from the Crypt* including the excellent "Midnight Mess" story. Such are the vagaries of the film industry! Subotsky did at one time also try to buy the rights to *The Haunt of Fear* but Gaines asked for too much money, that according to Subotsky, no company in their right mind would pay. And finally, just to prove how little times have changed in the last 25 years, a few years after *Tales from the Crypt* had been released, Subotsky ordered a copy of the 1971 Nostalgia Press reprint *The EC Horror Library* from New York. It was seized by British Customs, as it was still on their list of "comics harmful to children". He eventually secured the release of the book by pointing out that he was the producer of a film based on material from the book.

Excerpted from the forthcoming book "The House that Dripped Blood: A History of Amicus".



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MOVIES ON 8mm

While video distributors have been loudly proclaiming the advent of the home entertainments revolution, Super 8 home movies have been silently and steadily converting men.

I have no doubt that a number of you who are reading this feature are among the converted. But not everyone has received the word. So by way of introduction to this review section of movies available on the Super 8 gauge, I'd like to enlighten you on some whys and wherefores and dispel a few nasty rumours about Super 8.

It can, if you want it to, be the most expensive form of viewing films in your own home. However, it can also be about the cheapest. It is generally the specialist who prefers to spend all his hard earned cash while those of us who are more humble in our approach to movie viewing have to watch our pennies.

Your initial outlay will be for a projector. A good projector. The specialist may well spend over £500 for something like a Noris Stereo machine. If you want stereo that's a little more basic, there's the Elmo ST-6000 'M' for well under £200. There is a whole range of 'mono' projectors of very fine quality (and you really must steer clear of cheap rubbish) ranging

from around £120 up to anything under £200. But stick to the established names such as Eumig, Elmo and Senkyo.

The price of films can be high. The Peckage Movie, which has selected scenes and runs for about 16-18 minutes, can cost around the £30 mark, but it's worth shopping around. Features, which are normally (and generally expertly) abridged, can cost anything between £45 and you name it. But remember, most films are available for hire from movie libraries for such a low fee that, if you have a few friends willing to chip in, it works out cheaper than going to the cinema. And there are always second-hand films going at prices that can make Super 8 a very competitive form of home entertainment indeed.

Last end by no means least, with Super 8 you can, depending on the size of your home 'cinema', blow the picture up to a size that makes some of these tiny triple cinema screens look like television. Also with Super 8 you can enjoy 3D movies and films in Cinemascope (although wide-screen movies are quite new to the gauge but are steadily growing in number). Stereo is another new 'gimmick' and more and more films are being released in this format.

And so to the films themselves. Trying to decide where to begin is like trying to pick out the finest

single nugget in a gold mine. It's hard deciding which is the best. So with purely commercial reasons in mind, I'll start with **Superman—The Movie**.

Here's a perfect example of a **Package Movie**, which runs for about 18 minutes and includes a selection of scenes that capture the "feel" of the film.

The film boasts superb sound and print quality, which is important, and will cost you only £25.95 from Portland Films, 45 New Oxford Street, London WC1. It's guaranteed to make your audience cheer, but if you feel that 18 minutes doesn't do the movie justice, then you'll be pleased to know that a 50 minute feature is being released which, as yet, I haven't seen.

50-minute features are fast becoming popular among the Super 8 collectors, and one of the very best is **Westworld** distributed by Walton Films, 87 Richmond Street, London W6 7HN, and costing a little under £90. It can be purchased as three individual 17-minute segments for about £32 each if you don't want the whole thing.

Part One is called *The Duel* and shows how Richard Benjamin and James Brolin come to the futuristic Disneyland of Westworld where life-like robots create the atmosphere of the Old West. One such robot is the gunslinger, played menacingly by Yul Brynner. He provokes a gunfight with Benjamin who shoots down the robot in the saloon.

The Breakdown, Part 2, is when everything starts to go wrong. James Brolin gets bitten by a robot sneke after a jaunt into the desert, while back in Medieval World one robot knight goes berserk and kills one of the guests. The technicians, watching everything on closed circuit television, try to shut down the power, but the robots do not respond. Yul Brynner turns up again and Brolin, who suspects nothing has gone terribly wrong, decides to shoot him this time. Only Brynner shoots Brolin and then chases Benjamin out of town.

The Hunt leads Benjamin to the control centre where all the technicians have suffocated. Brynner follows him into the robot hospital where Benjamin throws acid over the gunslinger. Their final showdown takes place in Medieval World.

The editing is superb with a continual flow in continuity and every highlight of the film included. Again, the quality is excellent, and don't forget, if you don't want to spend out £90 you can acquire at your nearest movie library if it's available for hire, which it probably will be.

For crystal clear reproduction on your screen, you'll rarely find quality better than that provided by Universal whose films are distributed by Derann Film Services Ltd, 99 High Street, Dudley, West Midlands. **Battlestar Galactica** is a superb example of their ability to choose selected scenes for a 17-minute edition and making it look good as it did in the cinema.

This edition costs £29.95 but Derann also have a hire library for those near enough to call in. For a further £57.95 you can have the sequel, **Mission Galactica—The Cylon Attack** which runs for thirty three minutes. Again, this concentrates on one particular segment, which is the final battle between the humans and the Cylons. But to set the scene it shows how a legendary and seemingly lost Battlestar Commander, played by Lloyd Bridges, turns up and instigates his plans to attack the Cylons.

Again, first-class print and sound and superbly edited. It makes such a perfect continuation of the first **Galactica** film that by splicing the two together you get a magnificent 50-minute feature with no break in continuity.

Entertainment at its best is what Super 8 is all about and you can make it as expensive as you like or you can turn it into an economically viable proposition that will provide a most satisfying form of home viewing without burning holes in your pockets. It's all up to you.

Left: A scene from *Superman The Movie*. Below: The poster for the excellent *Westworld*. Bottom: A scene from *Battlestar Galactica*.



DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS

Feature by John Fleming

To be charitable, *Day of the Triffids* was a total disaster for its director Steve Sekely.

He had been born Istvan Szekely in Budapest in 1899. As an enthusiastic teenager, he wanted to be a writer. So he sent lots of short stories off to newspaper editors and lots of plays off to theatre managers. Eventually, his enthusiasm was rewarded. One of his pieces was published in a Budapest weekly edited by Sandor Corda (who later moved to Britain, changed his name to Alexander Korda and became a famous film producer). Sekely served as a soldier and reporter during World War I until he was seriously wounded and discharged from the army. He moved to Berlin and became a correspondent for several Budapest newspapers. Still enthusiastic, he began to write film scripts and directed his first feature *Rhapsodie der Liebe* in 1929. Another expatriot Hungarian, working in the Berlin office of Universal Pictures, gave him a helping hand into the new medium of the talkies; the friend was Joe Pasternak, who later moved to America and became a famous film producer just like Alexander Korda. Unfortunately, Sekely was not as lucky

as his friends—although it wasn't for lack of trying.

When Hitler came to power, Sekely returned to Budapest, where he shot 22 films in five years. Then, in 1938, the threat from fascism became greater, so he and his wife moved to Hollywood. He directed *Miracle on Main Street* (1940) for Columbia. Then he got trapped in low-budget film-making for poverty row studios, making movies such as *Revenge of the Zombies* and *Women in Bondage* (both 1943) for Monogram. In 1945, he formed his own company, Star Pictures, whose output included *The Fabulous Suzanne* (1946), *Blonde Savage* (1947) and *Amazon Quest* (1949).

After these were released, the only thing he could sensibly do was lie low and flee the country. Eventually, he went to Italy and directed *Cartouche* (1957) and *Desert Desperadoes* (1959) for RKO.

These were his main credits, together with writer/producer credits on 39 episodes of the tv series *New York Confidential* and 26 episodes of the series *Orient Express*. His big chance came when he was offered *Day of the Triffids*. The omens were good. The book had sold millions. Executive producer and



scriptwriter Philip Yordan had previously worked on the scripts of *Conquest of Space* (1955), *King of Kings* and *El Cid* (both 1961). Yordan's partner Bernard Glasser had produced *Return of the Fly* (1959). Special effects were to be handled by Wally Veevers, whose career stretched back to Alexander Korda's *Things to Come* (1936).

True, there were some problems with the casting. The hero, in the book, was an English triffid farmer. But in the film, for commercial box-office reasons, he had to be an American star. So Howard Keel was cast as an American seaman and the script had to be altered to explain what on earth he was doing in Britain. To complicate matters further, French actress Nicole Maurey was cast as the heroine who again, in the book, had been English. More deviations from the original storyline were required. Some exotic locations were also added to pep up the look of the film. So Spain became part of the itinerary for this British-based movie.

Production began in August 1961 and went badly. Howard Keel later said the script was so sparse he had to make up lines for himself so he had something to say. No-one seemed to have any confidence in the script or in the

film. Worst of all, when shooting was over and Sekely had edited the movie, it ran 55 minutes—far too short for a commercial screening. And even those 55 minutes were lacklustre. The film had no spectacular climax.

Bernard Glasser flew to Britain in an attempt to save the producers' investment. Cinematographer and director Freddie Francis was brought in to shoot additional scenes set in a lighthouse. Kieron Moore and Janette Scott were hired to play the newly-scripted couple eventually besieged in the lighthouse by massed triffids. In October 1962, more than a year after shooting had originally started, filming on the new scenes was continuing. Bernard Glasser was lamenting: "We made three hundred miniature mechanically-operated triffids but, by the time we magnified them and filmed them in Cinemascope, they weren't very effective. We had to write them off. An expensive set-back." Eventually, seven full-sized triffids were built, operated by electricity and compressed air; others were impersonated by actors in triffid-suits.

And, eventually, *Day of the Triffids* was completed and released to no one's very

great satisfaction. Sekely's career, what was left of it, never recovered. In 1969, he went to India to direct *Kenner* for MGM; and, in 1973, he returned to Hungary for *The Girl Who Liked Purple Flowers*. In 1979, aged 80, he died in Palm Springs after losing a battle with stomach cancer.

The Day of the Triffids (1963)

Janette Scott (as Karen Goodwin), Keiron Moore (Tom Goodwin), Howard Keel (Bill Masen), Nicole Maurey (Christine Durrant), Mervyn Johns (Mr Coker), Alison Leggat (Miss Coker), Janina Frye (Susan), Geoffrey Matthews (Luis De La Vega), Gilgi Hauser (Teresa De La Vega), Carol Ann Ford (Bettina), Ewan Roberts (Dr Soames), Collette Wilde (Nurse Jamison).

Directed by Steve Sekely and Freddie Francis. Screenplay by Philip Yordan, Art director Cedric Dawe, Makeup by Paul Rabiger, Photographed by Ted Moore. Edited by Spencer Reeve, Music by Rod Goodwin and Johnny Douglas, Special effects by Wally Veevers. Produced by George Pitcher. Executive producer Philip Yordan.

Time: 94 mins

Cert: X



the last horror film

A Special Report from the Cannes Film Festival by Avram Effell

It was a hot May afternoon in Cannes and Caroline Munro was waiting for the lift down a corridor in the very posh Hôtel Concorde-Martinez. But this was no extraordinary scene: many celebrities could be seen hanging about in hotel corridors last May in Cannes, during the Film Festival.

What was extraordinary, though, was the way Ms. Munro was waiting for the lift—frantically banging on the door with her fists and letting out desperate screams of terror. But anybody would have behaved in such a fashion, had they been chased, as she was then, by a wicked Joe Spinell obviously intending to continue the good job he began in *Maniac*.

Only, this time, the man behind the camera is no longer William Lustig, but David Winters. He was at one time Linda Lovelace's manager—he was involved in the production of *Linda Lovelace for President*. He was one of the Jets in *West Side Story*. Arab, a kind of James Dean lookalike... which he obviously no longer is: though the high-pitched voice is still the same. He has put on some weight, lost some hair, and grown a greish beard since then. And what is youngest in him now is the face of Buster Keaton printed on his white T-shirt.

Buster Keaton? Not exactly the type of company *The Last Horror Film* belongs in! "I love him", Winters says, "and, to tell the truth, I hate horror films." Well, has he forgotten that, even before this *Last Horror Film*, he did a Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde with Kirk Douglas, and was a "creative consultant" on *Island of Dr. Moreau*? Nevertheless, he continues and explains the film he originally wanted to make in Cannes during the Festival would have been a romantic love-story, if Caroline Munro's husband and coproducer Judd Hamilton had not insisted they should cash in on the current *Maniac* mania, bring Joe Spinell back, and write a horror yarn. Winters gave in as he felt the clash between the sunny charm of the French Riviera settings and a gory subject could be extremely fertile.

Thus he wrote a script with Judd Hamilton. Quickly, very quickly. Because these discussions were taking place hardly a month before the opening date of the Cannes Festival. The script was—roughly—completed within two weeks. And this may well explain why it may be reminiscent of a couple of films, among which is Vernon Zimmerman's *Fade to Black*.

Horror queen Jana Bates (*Caroline Munro*) is in Cannes to promote her new film and to receive a Best Actress award. Vinny, a horror film fan, is also in Cannes, hoping he can make there all the contacts he needs to get his film project off the ground, and, more than all, hoping to meet Jana Bates herself. He sends her a note telling her he is going to make her immortal, and sends each member of her entourage another note, not so nice, saying: "You have made your last horror film. Goodbye. You have understood by now that this guy Vinny, being impersonated by Joe Spinell, is not only a horror film fan, but also a dangerous psychopath. He soon decides that the best way to get to Jana is to kill off all those who stand in his way, his murders duplicating scenes he has seen again and again in his favourite films. He is helped by the fact that, whenever he does away with somebody, or rather with some body, the not-so-smart French cops believe it's a



publicity stunt for Jana's film.

First he decapitates Jana Bates' ex-husband/producer. Then he tries to stab her director/boyfriend Allen—a part played by David Winters himself—but has to make do with a couple of starlets instead. After which he carves up a publicity agent with a chainsaw (left over from some Texas Massacre...?). And so on.

Understandably, Jana and Allen think it wise to get away from Cannes and take refuge in a friend's castle. They don't know that tricky Vinny has already put a piranha in the swimming-pool of this castle. Fortunately for them, by some twist of fate, it's a couple of unexpected guests who will experience the pleasures of the pool and become the piranha's dinner.

Needless to say, all this can't go on forever, and Vinny eventually kidnaps Jana and takes her back to the castle—deserted after the fishy incident—to shoot, at last, his film *The Loves of Dracula*.

But when he hears the sirens of police cars, our cut-rate vampire trips on his cape and falls on one of his film props. Guess what? A stake, which pierces his heart!

Many points of the script had to undergo some last-minute changes due to lack of preproduction time. For instance, Winters

intended to shoot some scenes in Monte-Carlo during the famous Automobile Rally (which nearly coincides with the Cannes Festival), but had to give up the idea, as there was not enough time to obtain the authorizations needed for shooting.

Despite the use of time-saving video-techniques (Winters has done a lot of television shows, especially with Diana Ross) and a very hectic pace which often made it impossible—even for the publicist—to know where the crew was. They seemed to have a rule of not staying more than two hours in the same place. The film was soon behind schedule in its Cannes sequences, and Winters moved to Switzerland (near Geneva, where his "Dracula Castle" was) a week later than anticipated. The special effects team hired for the bloody killings was still working in London long after the shooting had begun. Winters was confident, though, he would not go over his budget, if only because, in addition to directing and playing in the film, he was also coproducing it!

Given the way it was made, it would be surprising should *The Last Horror Film* turn out to be a masterpiece. It may have the qualities of a good B-movie, though, if it is as fast-paced on the screen as the shooting was... and provided it is not as messy.



What has gone before I forget. A craft launched centuries before has returned to the planet Spondoolik IV and has crashed into the warehouse workshop of Metal Breakdowns Inc. which now inhabits its intended landing site. The craft is able to converse telepathically but has suffered a trauma upon its travels. Discovering that the ship was intended to return only if it found something of stupefyingly incredible importance to everything at large, the workers of Metal Breakdowns Inc repaired the craft and are planning to coax the unstable vehicle into retracing its course through the heavens! Now read on.



AS ALL OF SPONDOLIK IV FALLS AWAY
BENEATH, A TINY BLOBLET HANDS STILL
AGAINST THE VOID.

-TERRAPIN CRAFT TPN-7

BEHIND LIES THE INTERGALACTIC
NOTHINGNESS... BEFORE LIES THE
BECKONING THREAD OF A JOURNEY
YET TO BEGIN! A QUEST TO RETRACE
THE COURSE THAT THE ENIGMATIC
TERRAPIN CRAFT FIRST TOOK
CENTURIES BEFORE.



WE MADE IT!!

HUGO TO
SHIP. HUGO TO
SHIP. CAN YOU RE-
MEMBER YOUR
WAY, TPN-7?

I DRIFT FORLORN,
THE WAYS BEFORE;
-BUT WHICH THE WAY
THAT LEADS TO SHORE?

I TOLD YOU
HUGO! -IT DOESN'T
KNOW WHERE THE
#112? WE ARE!

WHAT YOU NEED AT TIMES
LIKE THIS IS A COOL HEAD!

FORTUNATELY ONE SUCH OBJECT IS
OWNED BY THE WISE OLD LIZARD
HUGO GREENBACK!!



AS I
HOPED, A FEW
ORBITAL PERTURBATIONS
PROGRAMMED IN ON MANUAL
OVER-RIDE HAVE REFRESHED
IT'S MEMORY! IT'S WILLING
TO RETRACE ITS STEPS!

I'LL
RE-START
ENGINES!!

THE VOYAGE IS BEGIN!



HUGO CONSULTS HIS CHARTS AND
LEDGERS, EAGER TO CALCULATE
THEIR FIRST POINT OF CALL!

...THE ASTEROID BELT
BETWEEN SPONDOLIK I AND
III! COULD THERE BE ANYTHING
IMPORTANT ENOUGH THERE TO HAVE
CAUSED THE SHIP TO RETURN?

HE PONDERS...



WHILE, BENEATH HIS FEET, CLARA THE
REPAIRER SUCCEUMS TO THE EFFECTS
OF WEEKS OF EXHAUSTING TOIL!

SHE SLEEPS...



IN HIS EXECUTIVE SUITE, BUSINESS
MANAGER ROLAND (BOGNOG)
WHIFFRONT DICTATES HIS PLANS TO
SECRETARY BIRD, HIS EXECUTIVE SWEETIE

SO WHEN
THIS TUNKHEAD FINALLY
FINDS WHAT IT FOUND BE-
FORE... I GOTTA HAVE A CON-
TRACT THAT'LL CEDE IT TO
ME LEGALLY - I DON'T
WANT TO CHEAT
THEM!

HE SCHEMES...



WHILE DEEP IN THE
ENGINE ROOMS, THERE
IS ACTIVITY OF A
DIFFERENT NATURE...

GET IN
HERE LOFTY... I'LL
GIVE 9 TO 1 AGAINST YOU,
CYCLOPS AND PIPE -
CLEANER BEATING
THE REST OF US!

LESS INTELLECTUAL

BUT LESS DESTRUCTIVE.



CRUMBS, FART
SUCK... YOU'RE
EVEN BETTING
ON THE OUTCOME
OF THE BETTING
NOW!

YOU'RE
NOT WELL!

I'M OK...
IN FACT I'LL
GIVE YOU 7-8-9
THAT I'M AS SANE
AS THE NEXT MAN!



NOT FAR DISTANT, CLONE IS FEEDING RATTLES, HIS METAL EATING SOUL-MATE!

SUDDENLY HE SENSES THE GAZE OF ANOTHER UPON HIS BELOVED CAT!

YOW AGAIN

THIS TIME CLONE KILL!

SCRIPES! HE'S SEEN ME!

GROUCH!



CAT BELONG TO CLONE, SEWER DWELLER!



COME BACK! CLONE TEACH LESSON!

BUT YOU CAN'T HIT ME... I WENT TO PUBLIC SCHOOL!

AFTER A BRIEF CHASE...



AS THE DEBRIS SETTLES...

UNEXPECTED IMPEDIMENT TO FLIGHT PATH... COLLISION IMMINENT!



GORDON BENNETT!!

ZOUNDS!



THE CRAFT CASCADES TO A HALT... APPARENTLY CAUGHT IN...

SOMETHING SOFT STRING BETWEEN THE ASTEROIDS?



WHILE DEEP WITHIN A LABYRINTH OF TUNNELS INFESTING ONE OF THE LARGER ASTEROIDS SITS A STRANGE ALIEN BEING, AT A STRANGE ALIEN MACHINE... DOING STRANGE ALIEN THINGS...

PONG PONG

THE ALARM!!



CAN IT BE THAT THE PRODIGAL HAS RETURNED?

NEXT MONTH! — THE CHILLING TRUTH BEHIND THE COSMIC CHEESE-MASTER! or — IF IT GOES ON LIKE THIS WE'LL END UP IN EMMENTHAL HOSPITAL!

Story and art by Paul Neary
Lettering by Jenny O'Connor



a starburst interview by john fleming

JON SORESENSEN

Jon Sorensen first became interested in special effects when, as a young boy, he was taken to see *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad*. He was fascinated by the cyclops. "It wasn't just the fact it was animated," he says. "It was unique. It had a hellish, satanist look to it. He had one aim in the film and that was to create havoc with the good guys. You didn't have to explain why he was doing it. The sight and scale of the thing was amazing. It was a gut-reaction to seeing a special effect. Something difficult to describe. That's why I came into this field: because you find the unusual."

He was brought up in Ayrshire, Scotland. That's a very attractive area of the country, but a little isolated. Not the easiest of places from which to break into the film business, which is concentrated in the Home Counties around London. But, as Sorensen says, "If it's in you to do something, it doesn't matter where you are; you'll find a way to do it. You must do. That's your life and, when you're no longer around, the only thing left behind is your work and that's the only thing that matters. For me, it was essential to get into the film business. So I dabbled in 8 mm photography and went to the inevitable photographic school in Strathclyde for three

years and got a degree in photography."

After getting his degree, Sorensen "made the effort, wrote round, saw people and finally got a break". He worked on a string of television commercials in London, then special effects supervisor Brian Johnson gave him a job on *Alien*, working on the detailing of miniatures. "My specific job," he says, "was initially as a model-maker. I spent about eleven weeks on the main refinery and on the 8 ft Nostromo shuttle. Then I went over to the stage, where I was assisting on the planet artwork, the atmosphere artwork, setting-up the ships and so on. Although I'm not interested in space movies as a subject, you learn techniques you can use in projects you'd like to make in the future. Actually, what I learned on *Alien* was how to exist on a special effects unit. It's a mosaic art-form. Everyone has something to throw in and you amalgamate all the elements and hopefully come up with the finished effect."

After *Alien* and some minor, outside, work on *Saturn 3*, effects supervisor George Gibbs recruited him to "assist in the special photographic effects and miniature set-ups" on *Flash Gordon*. "The unfortunate thing about *Flash Gordon*—which resulted in me leaving the project—was that they were

trying to get away from the lived-in look which had been propagated by films like *Star Wars* and *Alien*. They wanted to go back to the original *Flash Gordon*, which was like yoghurt-pots with fins. Things like that. So we certainly didn't use many Airfix kits for detailing."

But, if *Flash Gordon* was a difficult experience, it was only the start. Sorensen was then asked to work on the Disney project *Watcher in the Woods* (released last year in the US but pulled for re-shooting when audiences laughed at the climax).

Sorensen and the British special effects team were responsible for the earlier "insinuations" of a watcher: "You never actually saw the alien. You saw his effect: the effect he had on the environment. John Richardson did the floor effects. So he'd blow up the bridge when the alien tries to stop the central characters leaving the tower. And we would matte in the laser beams the alien could project from his hands and things like that. But you never actually saw the alien as such. It was insinuations as in H.P. Lovecraft. When we finished on the film, after about four months, they hadn't done the final sequence because they hadn't yet decided how it was going to look. So it fell to the people at Disney



Jon Sorensen meets his longtime idol, special effects wizard Ray Harryhausen.

in America. By then they'd finished **The Black Hole** and had their ACES motion-control equipment lying there doing nothing, so I suppose they felt they could do it."

One of the British crew's most effective sequences in the film is in which actress Lynn-Holly Johnson enters a Hall of Mirrors: "She sees the image of Bette Davis' daughter behind each and every mirror. The girl raises her arms and says 'Help me! Get me out of here!' We shot the girl from separate angles and did an optical marry-up. That's shooting a separate plate for each facet of the mirror then marrying them up onto one piece of film to give the final effect. We married it up sixfold, side-by-side-by-side, and then synchronised the plates so that the movement of the arms would be in synchronisation. Then it was front-projected and Lynn-Holly Johnson walked in front of it."

After finishing **Watcher in the Woods**, Sorensen went back to **Flash Gordon** briefly to work on some matte shots. And he was also involved in Gerry Anderson's ill-fated project **Five Star Five**. He was on the project for about five or six weeks during which he "did several designs and started several miniatures".

"There were some lovely elements," he says. "They went onto several planets and there were ideas to do animation and it sounded very good. There were none of these acrobatic dog-fights in space at all. It was all very, very straight: more of a **Space Odyssey** type of approach. Very demure, very beautiful sunrises and lovely lighting effects which would have been fine. It only ventured into the swashbuckling fantasy side of things when they went onto the planets and then it was the goodies versus the baddies."

"To my mind, there has never been a satisfactory way of doing a planet successfully—showing an atmosphere in

space. They've always been very, very static and unconvincing. So I devised a new way of doing those. It's a method which I made the mistake of discussing with other people and it's since been used in various forms on other projects—although not in exactly the same way I would have used it. It's been used in a very half-baked way. It's simply a way of projecting and motorising animated artwork onto a spherical planet surface. That's it in the simplest way I can say. There are other things like adding atmospheres for the planet or solar flares for a sun, which I was going to do with ruby lasers. Basically, you can use the ruby laser for projecting unusual light effects and you can deflect it. I also had a system of motorised still-plate front-projection which I wanted to use. In 2001, the still-plate front-projection was very static. It was beautiful, but it was projected onto a screen which restricted movement. You could motorise the whole rig and then you would be able to move around the scene.

"The spacecraft would have been interesting, too. I believe you must give them a sense of scale by dirtying them down. If you have a pristine-clean model, it's very difficult to give it a sense of size and scale. On **Five Star Five**, we wanted to use new shapes which hadn't been seen before. There's a book of artwork with Harry Harrison's name on the cover [*Mechanismo* published by *Pierrat*] and we loved some of the things in that. We felt the spaceships we'd seen in other projects had been very static. They fly overhead or across the screen, but there's nothing to show there's any life aboard. So we had ideas for mechanising sections so they'd move. There were massive arms doing things on one and there would have been smaller spaceships scurrying round a large one as it flew past. Something to give it a completely new slant. We were going to have eight or nine ships, each one completely

different from the others. You see, there were seven or eight different races of people in the film who had all evolved separately with their own functions and outlooks—like the difference between English and Arab and Chinese cultures. So the designs were different and we were going to have all sorts

Below and right: Effects man Jon Sorensen with one of his spaceships, built for the ill-fated Gerry Anderson production, **Five Star Five**. Centre: A portrait of Jon Sorensen by Pamela Marzetti. Below left: A scene from the deleted *Hand Forest* sequence from the Terry Gilliam/*Michael Palin* movie *The Time Bandits*. Below right: Jon Sorensen works on the refinery miniature used in the Alan Ladd Company film, *Outland*.



of exotic and esoteric craft to try and communicate this."

All this, of course, came to nothing because **Five Star Five** collapsed due to cash-flow problems. Sorensen went on to the Terry Gilliam/Michael Palin film **The Time Bandits**. Again he was working with Robin Brown,

with whom he had worked on **Watcher in the Woods** and who had been responsible for marrying-up some of the model effects on **Moonraker**.

"We were asked to devise certain visual effects sequences using models and mattes," says Sorensen. "I wanted to do stop-motion animation sequences for the Hand Forest scenes. This was a sequence (cut from the release-print of the film) in which the seven main characters—the seven dwarfs—go through this forest of overgrown hands: trees with hands growing at the top, swaying in the breeze. There was one scene where a woodchopper is hacking one down and they wanted us to devise a sequence where the hand is actually writhing and the sap—the blood—is coming out. They had some marvellous ideas.

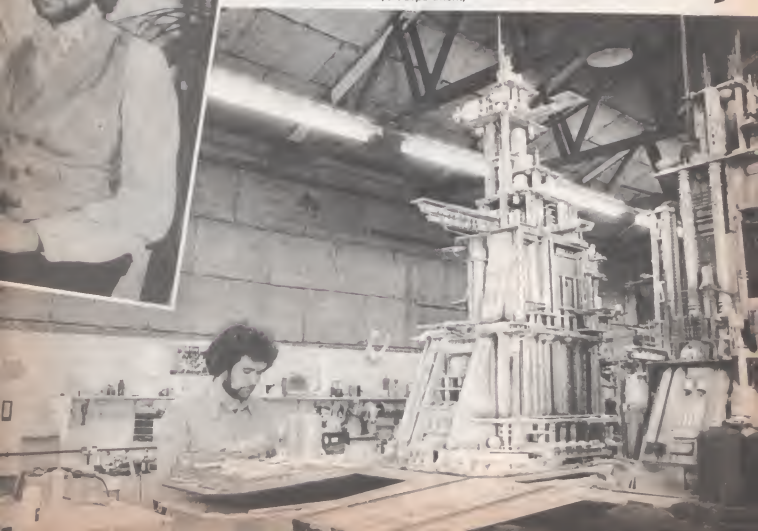
"I was holding out for stop-motion [the same technique Ray Harryhausen used to animate the cyclops in **The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad**]. I insisted that the Hand Forest should have been done with stop-motion, but they reckoned there was no way they could afford it because they would have had to have expensive armatures and so on. Initially, I was gotten onto the film on the understanding that I would be doing stop-motion but, as the money went down and down and down, stop-motion became more and more of a remote possibility. So finally the Hand Forest used mechanised sections of hands and glove puppets.

"There were models constructed which were unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons. They didn't project the right feel. The hands looked massive and the whole model just felt wrong and we were all disatisfied with it. I think the model-makers were working with hands left over from **Monty Python's Life of Brian**—which I believe were used in the Martian sequence. The model just didn't look like a plant. On a film, it's vital to have liaison between model-makers, art department,

photographic crews, matte artists and so on. Unless you are planned, scripted and storyboarded with each element clearly defined, you're going to come a cropper. And that's what happened. They had a set budget and that was it. I think the budget was something like £1¼ million, although they'll probably project it as a \$5 or \$6 million picture.

"One other sequence involved the seven midgets going into the 25th century and laser weapons were very much in evidence. What was to happen at the end of the film was a massive fight between the evil genius (David Warner) and the supreme being (Ralph Richardson). During this fight, all these elements appear from different space-war entrances. From one entrance, there's a laser gunship; from another Robin Hood (John Cleese); and there's a massive battle at the end. I built the laser gunship. They couldn't make up their minds what it should look like. So I more-or-less took it into my own hands and built it in four days. I was fed up waiting around for someone to make a decision so I just struck out and said *Right, I'm gonna do it*. We were on the film as a whole for about five months.

Sorensen then spent about three or four months on television commercials before a short involvement on **Outland**: "I was involved with seven Americans who came over championing a new front-projection process called Introvision. I'd been familiar with it for more than a year and a half because they'd been over to speak to us on **Watcher in the Woods** and we were to have had it on the stop-motion and special photographic miniature effects on **Thongor in the Valley of the Demons** [see **Starburst 26** for details on how this project collapsed]. The Introvision people were hired by director Peter Hyams to execute some of the model sequences on **Outland** and I was with them for about three weeks."



The Introvision process was used briefly on **The Incredible Shrinking Woman**. It involves a special camera and 60-foot front-projection screen to combine live-action and model work, location footage or artwork. Sorensen says, "They were using more than one front-projection screen, which means you can have a still photograph, project it and, by various uses of mattes and double or triple screens, you can introduce a live-action individual into a still photograph and actually make him walk behind a feature in the still photograph. It's done by having him walk behind a matte. It's all very clever juggling because, as soon as you matte out one element, you must replace it otherwise you'll see the matte. He's got to be seen walking behind that same particular feature in the photograph."

After **Outland**, Sorensen returned to television commercials again. He describes them as mini-feature films: "We've had to matte skies in like **Flash Gordon**. There's an immense amount of model work involved. They really are just mini-feature films. Suddenly you get a day's work and just get thrown in there and do it." Currently, he is working on **Dark Crystal** at EMI Elstree. Produced by Jim Henson of **The Muppet Show** and Gary Kurtz of **Star Wars**, he describes it as "a Lord of the Rings sword-and-sorcery type thing done with surrealistic Yoda-type characters and all utter fantasy from start to finish".

Sorensen's longer-term ambitions, though, lie in a different fantasy area, H.P. Lovecraft: "He wrote a whole range of stories from the demure to the massive and, if you really wanted to get something of Lovecraft's together and you had a certain amount of money to spend, you could always find one of his stories to fit that budget. It doesn't cost a lot of money although it could if you wanted to spend a lot—I mean, At The Mountains of Madness is all ice and snow; you could do it in Norway and could spend a fortune on things like that."

He has written three script outlines based on Lovecraft works: *The Fishermen of Falcon Point*, *The Colour Out of Space* and *The Shuttered Room*. "There was a version of *The Shuttered Room* made in this country in 1966," he says. "That was an unfortunate piece of film-making. All the Lovecraft elements were either prostituted or discarded, although they went down to the West Country and had some lovely locations—windmills and beaches and lovely rockfaces and really gothic elements. They had some of the right essence of Lovecraft in there. But it's the old cliché that what you don't see is much more frightening than what you do see. In Lovecraft, you don't actually see the so-called monsters. You see the effect they have on the environment, on the people. You might find a dismembered body or a guy walking around with his head missing. You see the effect of this evil influence. And the fascinating thing about doing a Lovecraft movie would be that you could use photographic effects in subtle ways. Still giving the same sense of strangeness you get in a space movie, but in a more environmental way. It's a different sense of strangeness: a gothic flavour."

"But, if we're talking about making a Lovecraft movie as a cinema production, then the chances of getting finance for one of the smaller stories would be minimal simply because, if you make a film in this country—unless you make it for under £1 million—you are not going to get your money back solely on the home market. So you must aim your movie at the international market in order to recoup your initial backing. So I think, really, the best medium for the kind of thing I'm interested in would be television. That's really what I'm after at the moment."



Top: Sorensen works on the *Nostromo* model, used in the sf horror shocker, *Alien*. Centre: Another of Jon Sorensen's spaceships for the aborted Gerry Anderson project *Five Star Five*. Above: The multi-mirror effect utilised in the as-yet-unreleased Disney thriller, *Watcher in the Woods*.

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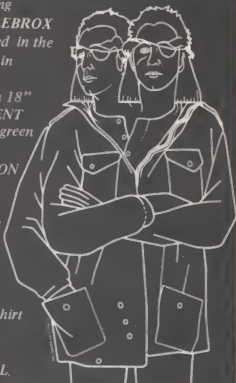
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It's only a movie

I hear that the *It's Only a Movie* panel at the recent Fantasy Convention in Birmingham was a great success. I did chair it, of course, but as I was somewhat in the grip of alcohol I can remember little about it. But I do recall that the audience entered into the spirit of the affair and only threw objects that lacked hard edges—such as rotten tomatoes, eggs, cabbages and used copies of *Starlog*.

The line up of talent was impressive—as well as me there was Tise Vahimagi, the famous Japanese tv expert, John Fleming who, apart from writing for *Starburst*, is now working as a researcher for *Tiswas* (for the benefit of our foreign readers I won't explain what *Tiswas* is) and Ramsey Campbell, Britain's leading horror writer. Last and by no means least (what a strange saying that is when you think about it) we also had with us Dez Skinn, former editor of *Starburst*. Dez was in good form and kept the audience in stitches with his jokes and witticisms until I managed to switch off his microphone...

A surprise visitor to the convention was Gary Kurtz who picked up a prize for *Empire Strike Back* and also said a few words about the film he is making in England with Frank Oz, the Muppet man. Apparently the film, a fantasy, will be populated entirely by Yodak-like creations, an idea that doesn't exactly thrill me.

I tried to interest Mr Kurtz in buying my *Jawman* script, suggesting that the shark man could be played by a giant puppet, but he didn't seem very interested. Strangely enough he disappeared shortly after that...

My horoscope in the *TV Times* recently told me that "... a film or tv play will move you profoundly, and urge you to make a change in your own life." Crumbs, I thought, I wonder what movie it'll be. Will it be *The Lone Ranger*? Will I come out of the cinema filled with a burning desire to wear a mask and ride about London on a white horse righting wrongs and being nice to minority groups? Well no, I didn't. All I came out of *The Lone Ranger* with was a pain in my side from laughing too much.

You've got to feel sorry for poor Lord Grade. This is yet another dud he's associated with and he must be wondering by now if someone's out to get him. The problem with *The Lone Ranger*, apart from its star Milton Spillsbury, is that the makers had no idea how to approach such a comic book/pop mythological character. The first third of the movie is like a conventional, if dull, Western and then there's this drastic change of stylistic gears when the hero finally dons his black mask and starts acting in approved Lone Ranger fashion. It's just too much for the audience to swallow and instead of being swept along by the action they just burst out laughing.

It would have worked better if the fairy tale atmosphere had been established from the very beginning, as in *Superman* 1 where you start off with the page out of the comic book. My approach would have been to have an old man telling the story to a bunch of kids in a western town—that way you'd also be able to justify the awful narration that keeps intruding on the sound track—and then at the end of the movie cut back to the old man proving to the kids that it wasn't just a tall tale by revealing that he *is* the Lone Ranger (you can have this idea for free, Lord Lew, if it's not too late).



Above: *Brain* (Harry Dean Stanton), *Meggie* (Adrienne Barbeau), *Sneke* (Kurt Russell) and the *President of the United States* (Donald Pleasence) are cornered in the *World Trade Centre* by the Duke (Isaac Hayes) and his men. They escape by causing a jet of steam to leap up and frighten the convicts!



Above: After a chase in which the Duke sets off after *Sneke* and the President without his men, *Sneke* and the Prez scale the wall at the end of a mined bridge. Right: The Duke is played by Isaac Hayes. Above right: Season Hubley is dragged beneath the rotting floorboards by *Crazies*, the criminally insane inmates of New York Prison.

But no amount of doctoring the finished movie could overcome the major liability of Milton Spillsbury, the George Lazenby of the Eighties. They may have dubbed his voice but it wasn't enough—they should have dubbed his whole body. He just looks plain silly in his Lone Ranger costume instead of cutting an imposing figure that would strike fear into outlaw hearts, etc. One feels that any outlaw encountering him on the trail would simply collapse with laughter—like the audience.

Best thing in the movie is the villain, Cavendish, who is played with a manic intensity by Christopher Lloyd (reminded me of the younger Raymond Massey). And the best and funniest moment came when Tonto (*Michael Horse*) hands the Lone Ranger some silver bullets during target practice and says, "Use these—they are more accurate." Old Lonesome accepts them without comment, as if every Indian carried around a supply of

perfectly-machined silver bullets. It's even more absurd when you realize that conventional bullets cost a fortune in the Old West and were used very sparingly (after a Sam Peckinpah type shoot-out the survivors would all be bankrupt for life). If I remember correctly the real Lone Ranger had a secret silver mine which provided him with silver for his bullets as well as money to finance his philanthropic adventures...

Browsing through the credits to see who to blame for this ludicrous movie I see the names of Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts among those responsible for the screenplay. These two gentlemen not only created *Charlie's Angels* but also produced the tv version of *Logan's Run*. I rest my case.

Another movie that didn't move me profoundly or change my life was *Escapee* from New York. Not that I really thought it would but at least I did expect to emerge

starring John Brosnan



singing John Carpenter's praises yet again. Instead it left me with the growing feeling that John Carpenter's reputation is becoming over-inflated.

Escape certainly starts off well. Carpenter skillfully sets up an interesting situation which is full of exciting potential but fails to deliver the goods. The big disappointment is the way he lets the background go to waste—here is Manhattan Island transformed into a giant prison run by the inmates themselves but apart from a few intriguing sequences when the hero first arrives on the island, such as the visit to the theatre and the attack of the "crazies", we see very little of what life is like

in this bizarre, pressure-cooker of a society where women are scarce and anarchy rules.

Instead of fully developing the situation Carpenter lets the picture degenerate into a fairly routine chase-thriller which becomes increasingly devoid of originality and inventive touches as it progresses. The plot simply falls to pieces suggesting that halfway through the writing of the screenplay Carpenter ran out of both ideas and creative juice. The way in which the hero and his companions escape from the villain (*Isaac Hayes*) and his men in the lobby of the Trade Center is, for example, ridiculous. First they incapacitate a veritable army of thugs with a feeble cloud of steam and then limp their way outside to be saved by Ernest Borgnine who drives them away in his cab. This makes the second time that Carpenter has got his hero out of trouble by having Borgnine appear with his cab at an opportune moment—a sure sign of atrophy of the plotting cells in the brain.

The subsequent chase across the George Washington Bridge is also a feeble affair. For some reason the villain follows them without bringing any of his men, and the mines don't look as if they would have served as an efficient barrier to a determined army of 3,000,000 criminals for 5 seconds much less several years (I also couldn't understand how the map showing the location of the mines came to be in the hands of those on the island when we're told the man who drew it got shot by the police after crossing the bridge. Did the police obligingly post the map back to Manhattan?).

Escape is basically a badly thought-out piece of work which, for all its technical virtuosity, is inferior to the two movies it most closely resembles—*The Ultimate Warrior* and *A Boy and His Dog*. Carpenter is an adept visual technician but weak in the areas of plotting and dialogue (the latter in *Escape* consists of nothing but *homages* to various Howard Hawks movies—after awhile you start wishing the characters would stop being cute and actually say something!) and I'm also beginning to suspect he's not very good at handling actors. I don't know whose idea it was to have the star, Kurt Russell who is a good actor, go through the whole movie doing a bad imitation of Clint Eastwood but I bet it was Carpenter's.

Escape isn't a dud movie in the sense that *The Lone Ranger* is—it has some very good moments, especially in the first third—but it's a very disappointing movie because it's only a fraction of what it could have been. And *should* have been.

I was chatting to Ray Harryhausen the other evening about airship movies (yes folks, this is the column that drops more names than a falling telephone directory) and he mentioned a title that I forgot to include in my list in *Starburst 36*. It is, of course, Frank Capra's 1931 epic *Dirigible* but I can't comment on it because I've never seen it. Our talk also reminded me of the abandoned Willis O'Brien project called *The War Eagle* which was to have climaxed with an aerial battle between giant eagles and airships above New York. Work was begun on it in the late 1930s but airships went out of fashion before it could be completed.

Speaking of airships, there are still plenty of copies available of my novel called (*Sorry, we've run out space*—Editor).

Above: The *Crazies* stream out of the hole they have smashed in the floor of the Chock Full O'Nuts store and set off in pursuit of Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell). Needless to say Plissken doesn't wait around too long.



book world

I have been inundated by letters from sympathetic readers incensed by John Brosnan's unprovoked assault on me. Thank you both—I'm doing fine. I don't hold it against Brosnan: if I looked like him I'd probably hold a grudge against the rest of the human race.

It's the quiet season just now for new books. The publishers are idling along in low gear, holding back their real goodies for the autumn. There are a lot of reprints around, but nothing new and exciting. I have even been reduced to reading a Robert Hale novel. Hail, in case you have never heard of them, are one of Britain's most prolific of publishers, but their sales are almost entirely confined to public libraries. Few of their books ever appear in paperback; few of their authors are people you've ever heard of (most of them sound like pseudonyms). The novel I chose, more or less at random, was *Scorpion* by Neville Kea (£6.25). The blurbs inform me that Kea is also the author of *The Glass School*, *The World of Artemis* and *The Rats of Megaera*, three novels which had hitherto escaped any attention.

Scorpion introduces us to a mad genius scientist, Morelli, who has invented a machine which opens a gate into other worlds... a kind of matter transmitter, in fact. He persuades two colleagues, Doctors Enridge and Skarr, to undertake exploration of one of these

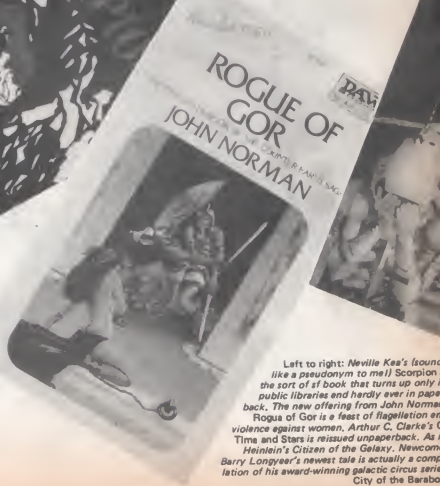
society has grown up on the surface, but now the Master intends to destroy them and reclaim his birthright. The krebschids are his weapon. Enridge resolves to stop him.

This is all fairly familiar stuff. As a novel, *Scorpions* suffers from being written at too headlong a pace, making abrupt and dizzying transitions from one locale to the next, while its plot reels around looking for a way forward. On the other hand, it's written with more verve than I had expected, and carries the reader very quickly through its 158 pages. It's strictly a time-passer, but I have to say I've read far worse from reputable and established authors.

John Norman is an established author, though hardly a reputable one. His latest novel, *Rogue of Gor* (DAW Books, \$2.50) is the 15th in his series set on the "counter-Earth" world of Gor, invisible to us because it's always hidden by the sun. It has human inhabitants, but they differ from (most of) us here on Earth because their only apparent interest is bondage. This wasn't so apparent in the early novels, which tended to have plots and adventures with a

hint of bondage on the side. These days the emphasis is reversed, and the books have page after page of men enslaving women, chaining them up, tying them down, teaching them their place (which, of course, they love) and using them sexually... and occasionally going off for a few pages of adventure to keep up the novelistic pretence. The books have got longer and longer, and the sales huger and huger. I wonder why. These days Norman has another variant to peddle. This is the independent, liberated Earth woman, who rejects being enslaved by man. So the hero, who is not a chap given to pleading, turns his back on her saying, "Well, if that's how you feel, I won't enslave you, so there!" As he walks away she cells out, wistfully, "If it really means that much to you, maybe I could wear just a teensy little chain." But he is not to be moved. She pleads more and more, and after a couple of pages is begging him to tie her up, whip her, enslave her, own her, treat her real bad, etc. This proves that this is what all women really want, deep down. OED. The author knows, because he teaches philosophy at a New York college (no kidding!).

My opinion of these books, in case you hadn't gathered it, is that they are unspeakable trash. The publisher has claimed some redeeming social merit for them: reading Gor novels stops you going out and tying up women for real, or some such. I'm not convinced... but in any case, is there any reason why therapeutic novels have to be so long-winded, badly-written and boring?



worlds, by pointing a gun at them until they step through. On the other side they meet, and eventually win the confidence of a race of super-beavers, the Bhankoi. These, they learn, are being threatened by huge, vicious and poisonous scorpion-like creatures, the krebschids, spreading outwards from the polar regions. Unless they can be defeated somehow, Bhankoi society seems doomed. Den Enridge takes up the challenge, and soon finds himself in a mysterious underground city in the far north, where a race of beautiful and semi-immortal humans live under the rule of the Master (a massive creature, more God than men). They are the descendants of a small group who hid there millennia before when a holocaust ravaged their world. In the meantime the Bhankoi

Left to right: Neville Kea's (sound like a pseudonym to me!) *Scorpion* is the sort of sf book that turns up only in public libraries and hardly ever in paperback. The new offering from John Norman, *Rogue of Gor* is a feast of flagellation and violence against women. Arthur C. Clarke's *Time and Stars* is issued in paperback. As is Heinlein's *Citizen of the Galaxy*. Newcomer Barry Longyear's newest tale is actually a completion of his award-winning galactic circus series *City of the Barabors*.

Meanwhile, Penguin Books have been bolstering their sf list by the cunning expedient of issuing es adult books which were previously in the Puffin list for children. One can see their point, too: particularly in the case of established sf authors, the only difference between their children's and adult books is that the former tend to have teenage heroes and heroines. As a bonus, the children's books are often a good deal better written (children have less tolerance for bad writing) and less pretentious. The two latest Penguins are *Of Time and Stars* by Arthur C. Clarke (£1.25) and *Citizen of the Galaxy* by Robert Heinlein (£1.50). The Clarke book is a volume of short stories which weren't originally written for children anyway; the book is a sampler designed to get people hooked on his work. As such it's recommended to anyone who hasn't read Clarke's short stories. Of all the mega-giants of sf Clarke is, to me, the one whose reputation is best founded. He does have a real visionary imagination, and while he isn't the world's greatest writer his prose is never crude. He is best at novel length, where he can give his imagination full rein, but there are a good many ingenious, original and enjoyable stories in this book.

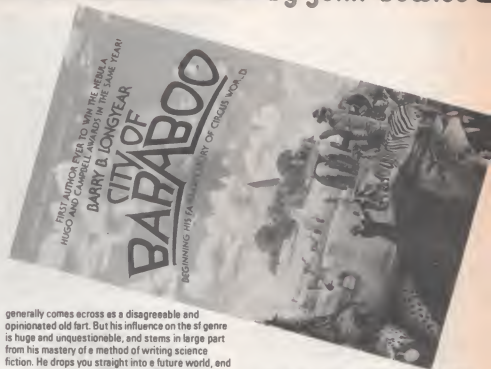
Heinlein is the figure of critics tend either to love or hate. At his worst (chiefly in his recent books) he is long-winded, preachy, dogmatic, sentimental and

generally comes across as a disagreeable and opinionated old fart. But his influence on the sf genre is huge and unquestionable, and stems in large part from his mastery of a method of writing science fiction. He drops you straight into a future world, and then very expertly works in the background information you need in order to understand what is going on. To do this without stopping to lecture the reader is very difficult; Heinlein et his best makes it look so easy that you hardly notice he's even done it. It's like watching an expert conjuror at work. *Citizen of the Galaxy*, which is set in a future galactic civilization in which slavery plays a large part but otherwise doesn't resemble John Norman in the by least, is a good example of his skill, and is an inventive and readable novel.

Which is more than I could say for *City of Baraboo* by Barry B. Longyear (Berkley, \$2.25). (And try saying that through a few times quickly!) Longyear is the latest Great White Hope of American sf (they come along roughly every two years), but on the evidence of this book it's impossible to see why. A couple of hundred years in the future Earth's last circus finds itself sinking into extinction, so its enterprising boss takes it off into space, to introduce the delights of the Big Top to different parts of the galaxy. Naturally on every planet they visit there's some mystery to be solved, and naturally our ingenious heroes work it all out in the nick of time. Longyear evidently knows a good bit about circus life, but I'm mystified as to why anybody should think an endless series about interstellar circus life should be worth writing or reading. Nor does Longyear's writing lend any distinction to the proceedings. This new emperor seems to me utterly lacking in clothes.

The big new news in the sf world, meanwhile, is that after a thirty-year gap Isaac Asimov is writing a fourth Foundation novel, provisionally entitled *Lightning Rod*. The original Foundation trilogy—which first appeared piecemeal in *Amazing SF* during 1942-50—is one of the most successful of all sf works, and won a Hugo Award in 1966 as the Best Series of all time. Likely big-selling new American titles for the later part of 1981 or early 82 include a new Stephen King novel, *Cujo*, the latest Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle collaboration, *Oath of Fealty*, and Robert Silverberg's *Majipoor Chronicles*, a sequel to *Lord Valentine's Castle*.

Now is the time to start thinking about registering for next year's British Science Fiction Convention. It's called Channelcon and it will be held at the Brighton Metropole (site of the 1979 World SF Convention) over the Easter weekend—9th-12th April 1982. Guests of Honour are the writers John Sladek and Angela Carter. There will be a full programme of talks, panels, films and so so, plus art show, book dealers, bars open late into the night, parties, fancy dress, discos and all manner of fun and frolic. John Brosnen will buy a drink for anyone carrying a copy of *Starburst*. Registration costs £3 supporting and £6 attending (supporting membership means you get all the convention literature; you have to pay the extra for attending membership if you actually go) to Channelcon, 4 Fletcher Road, Chiswick, London W4 5AY. Rates go up on January 1st, so register soon.



TV ZONE

Not too long ago I received an interesting and rather intriguing letter from Neil Alsop of Bristol. He is a grade-A tv buff and since the early '60s has put thousands of tele-viewing hours as well as amassing a stockpile of tv info.

Neil's letter raised several points which I was glad to hear—partly because it represented a voice from the great Out There with the same thoughts on the structure of British television as myself, but mostly because he is more than aware of the problem of communication between the viewers and the tv station programmers. Furthermore, he is one of those strange animals that tv companies refuse to believe exists—an intelligent viewer with a keen interest and knowledge in *what* is shown, *what could* be shown, and *what should* be shown. If he likes an imported American series, for instance, he takes the time to find out how much (in terms of episodes/seasons) of the show was originally produced and cares enough to ask questions when an episode, or even an entire season of episodes is not screened.

Neil comments that "HTV, my local station, seem to be totally committed to ignoring their viewers' requests, smugly believing that they are providing a good, well-balanced service. Ten years ago that was true but in the last few years most of what we get is an insult to the intelligence.

"HTV's attitude toward people who write in seems to be *How dare they tell us what we want them to watch!* To elucidate on this point I will mention a heated battle in the local press letters page some years ago between HTV Public Relations department and individuals who amongst other things were pleading for a third screening of *The Prisoner* and a first screening of *Space: 1999*/series 2. In the end an *impasse* was reached where HTV stated that their policy was never to screen anything more than twice—a policy which is often ignored when it suits their planning.

"*Space: 1999*/series 2 has still not been seen in the HTV region—joining the ranks of *The Secret Service*, *Mr Rose*/series 3, *Land of the Giants*/series 2, *Mission Impossible*/series 1 & 2, *Felony Squad*/series 2 & 3, *Branded*/series 2 etc. It seems that a few programme planners have their set ideas and will not budge whatever!"

Now I find all of this interesting and annoying at the same time. Local tv stations *do* tend to treat their viewers as if they haven't shifted their brains out of neutral, and screen material as if nobody watches it anyway.

Late-night (10:30 plus) programming is the best—if not the most outrageous—example for supreme lack of respect for the viewer. For instance: You see three episodes of a particular series and then suddenly, on the fourth week, you're confronted with the series' *opening* episode which introduces all the main characters! For instance: You follow the *Lou Grant* series (on what used to be Thursday nights in the London area) when suddenly it doesn't appear one evening—and what is usually Wednesday night's *Barney Miller* turns up instead! And if you were following *Barney Miller* you would have been suddenly faced with an episode of *Three's Company* as an out-of-the-blue replacement.

In short, not only is it extremely difficult to get on the tube the material you want to see



but the material that is shown is telecast in no particular order (which is simply crazy if the series has a chronological structure). This sort of lunatic programming can serve up anything from old-established friends/characters being suddenly

introduced to each other for the first time to dead characters amazingly turning up three episodes later full of life!

To continue with Neil Alsop's letter, he also raises some rather interesting questions which, in part, I'll attempt to answer here:



Patrick McGeehan as the ever-popular Prisoner. Reader Neil Alsop of Bristol wants to know whether the Josetta episode of *Danger Man* was the story in which Drake resigned, thus providing the link to *The Prisoner* tv show.

the rest of the *Danger Man* series. *Josetta* was the third telecast episode when the series began (with this particular segment shown in the London area on September 25, 1960), and involved Drake aiding a blind girl who's trying to find her brother's killer.

2. What were the titles of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* two-parters, only seen in this country as feature films?

There were eight *U.N.C.L.E.* feature-length movies released in Britain, six of which were originally telecast in the US as two-part episodes. Here's the run-down: *To Trap a Spy* ('66)/*The Vulcan Affair* (orig US tx Sept 22 '64); *The Spy With My Face* ('66)/*The Double Affair* (US tx Nov 17 '64); *One Spy Too Many* ('65)/*The Alexander the Greater Affair* (US tx Sept 19 & 26 '65); *One of Our Spies is Missing* ('66)/*The Bridge of Lions Affair* (US tx Feb 4 & 11 '66); *The Spy in the Green Hat* ('66)/*The Concrete Overcoat Affair* (US tx Nov 25 & Dec 2 '66); *The Karate Killers* ('67)/*The Five Daughters Affair* (US tx Mar 31 & Apr 7 '67); *The Helicopter Spies* ('67)/*The Prince of Darkness Affair* (US tx Oct 2 & 9 '67); *How to Steal the World Affair* (US tx Jan 8 & 15 '68).

3. Was *The Carpathian Killer Affair* episode of *Girl from U.N.C.L.E.*—never seen in this country—a two-part episode?

The wonderful episode where April Dancer ends up inside a giant toaster? It was only a one-hour segment, airing originally on US tv on Feb 14 '67; it was also shown via BBC-tv in either late '67 or during '68.

4. The *Ironside/Sarge* tv-movie *The Priest Killer*—where does it fit into the *Ironside* chronology?

The Priest Killer (orig US tx Sept 14 '71) introduced George Kennedy's Sarge character the week before the series premiered. It also served as a 5th season intro for Raymond Burr's *Ironside* series, involving Burr's Chief of Detectives and Kennedy's policeman turned priest with the murder of a priest in San Francisco. Directed by Richard Colla, the tvm was scripted by Robert Van Scoyk and Joel Oliansky.

5. What was the *Six Million Dollar Man* story concerning Irish terrorists which was banned by the IBA?

A good one, this. The segment was called *Outrage in Balinderry*, from a teleplay by Paul Schneider. It involved nothing more frightening than the kidnapping of a US Ambassador's wife by "revolutionaries" who want certain prisoners released in exchange. Naturally, Steve Austin is shipped out to rescue her. I can only assume that it was missed because it may have put ideas in the wrong heads. Direction was by Earl Bellamy.

6. Episode guides for both series of *Supercar* and the first of *Space Patrol*—

A nice idea but a bit too lengthy to detail here. However, for Larry Dart and Mike Mercury fans, here's an outline. *Supercar* ran from Jan 28 to Aug 6 '61 (26 eps), then Feb 4 to Apr 29 '62 (13 eps). Scripting chores were shared between Martin & Hugh Woodhouse and Gerry & Sylvia Anderson, with Alan Pattillo helming most of the episodes. *Space Patrol* (first season) ran from July 5 to Aug 22 '63; it was directed by Frank Goulding and written by creator Roberta Leigh, who also co-produced with Arthur Provis. Eight episodes aired during the first season.

1. The *Danger Man* episode *Josetta* (which was only shown in the Midlands region)—was this the episode in which Drake resigned at the end?

Drake resign in the *Josetta* episode? It would have made things rather awkward for

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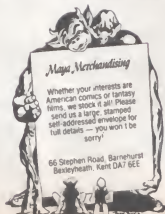
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A Starburst Interview by John Fleming

TERRANCE DICKS



Two scenes from the highly popular Jon Pertwee series of *Doctor Who*, for which Terrance Dicks was the script editor.

"**B**eck in the late 1940s and early 1950s," says Terrance Dicks, "Woolworths used to have a kind of dump counter where they sold cheap American magazines: *Astounding Science Fiction*, *Black Mask Detective Stories* and *Thrilling Ranch Romances*. I used to buy the first two but never fancied the romances—and that was really what got me started, I suppose."

Terrance Dicks was born in London's East Ham and went on to read English at Cambridge University. After two years National Service in the army he became a copywriter and, during five years in the advertising business, began to sell some of his drama work. Eventually, he was able to become a full-time freelance writer working initially in radio, then in television. Among his early credits were episodes of *The Avengers* and the soap opera *Crossroads*. He is very grateful to the much-maligned *Crossroads*.

"In my day," he says, "it was like a relay race. You had to write four scripts for a week in a week and then somebody else did the next week. That was very good training: having to work to a very tight deadline."

One of the other writers on *Crossroads* was Derrick Sherwin who, a few years later, phoned Dicks up out-of-the-blue. Sherwin said he was leaving his job as script editor on *Doctor Who* and would Terrance be interested? "I was a freelance writer at the time," says Dicks. "That's a fairly precarious way of making a living and the BBC was offering an initial three-month contract. So I thought, well, whatever happens it can't be bad. It's three months regular money. And there went the next six years of my life just like that. I'd had no connection with *Doctor Who* before that, except as a viewer, but these things are often done in a fairly casual, last-minute way. A lot of one's life is dependent on chance."

Dicks is the longest-serving script editor on the long-running show and, during his time there, he worked on other programmes such as the ill-fated BBC tv series *Moonbase 3*. In 1974, he also wrote a *Doctor Who* stage play. But his main work was script editing the *Doctor Who* television series. He worked closely with producer Barry Letts on the outline of each season: "We would sit down and say, right, we have five shows to get out. What kind of shows are they going to be? Who are we going to get to write them? And so we would come up with the basic story idea, then call in the writer and discuss it with him." On a technically complicated show like *Doctor Who*, the script editor is responsible for the script from this initial conception stage, through first draft and rewrites into production—working with the director, making cuts and alterations. "You're midwife to a television show," says Dicks: "From the first gleam in its creator's eye until it actually goes on the screen."

Doctor Who is a continuing show, controlled by a producer and a script editor, interpreted by a usually well-established lead-actor. So doesn't that mean individual writers, creating only isolated stories, have little impact? Dicks disagrees: "Good stories and bad stories will effect the ratings. Not enormously, but they do. It isn't true to say that you can put any old rubbish on week after week and people will watch it because it's *Doctor Who*. It absolutely isn't and, at times, the show's been known to slip. To some extent, it also depends what ITV puts up against you. In my time, they tried *Space 1999*, which pulled some figures for the first week and then slipped and slipped because people went back to watching *Doctor Who*. I think *Space 1999* ended up somewhere like 11.00am on a Saturday morning: a sort of elephants' graveyard. They tried putting various other things against us, but nothing worked in my time."

Recently, ITV has split-networked *Buck Rogers* against the show in slightly-varying time-slots. In some regions, *Buck* has beaten *Doctor Who* and, in most, it appears to have drawn a significant proportion of the audience away from the BBC show—hardly surprising, given the vast difference in budget. Dicks believes, though, that this is probably a short-term defection of viewers: "When you've been on for eighteen years, as *Doctor Who* has, anything new has the attraction of novelty for a time. But *Doctor Who* is going to be on for a longer part of the year and I imagine it will gradually pull the viewers ▶

back again."

Doctor Who does, of course, change in style—normally gradually, sometimes suddenly. When Terrance Dicks replaced Derrick Sharwin as script editor, Barry Letts became the new producer and Jon Pertwee took over the central role from Patrick Troughton. So the show's three most important influences changed simultaneously and the direction of the series was bound to alter. "The first element," explains Dicks, "was Jon Pertwee's personality, which gave you a new kind of Doctor. And then the sort of predilections that Barry and I had also came into it.

"In my case, that was basically for a fast-moving, action-adventure show. I used to see it in the grand old tradition of *The Parits of Pauline* and the Saturday morning cinema serials. If you have a four or six-part show with cliff-hangers, the main thing is it's got to move, got to hook the audience, got to be exciting. The message and to sociological significance are there, but they're secondary to good, popular entertainment. I don't think the two are incompatible. Look at Charles Dickens. He used to publish his books as serials. For the long, well-plotted story which works on all kinds of levels, he's unparalleled. Not only is it funny or dramatic with plot twists, but you can also approach it with great earnestness about symbolism or the dark side of human nature and the pressures of society and it's all there. It's just incredibly rich. *Doctor Who* I wouldn't compare with Dickens but I think, for a long time, it has been good and popular in a way few other shows have. One of the interesting things about it, too, is the way its viewership goes right across the board."

However, there does seem to be a distinct difference between the show's British and American fans. Terrance Dicks says, "In Britain, the letters I get are mostly from kids of about twelve who watch the show and read the *Doctor Who* books. The American letters I get are mostly from young adults—sometimes people in their thirties and forties. American science fiction fans are extraordinary. They're like football fans in Britain. I went to the first *Doctor Who* Convention in Los Angeles, which was extraordinary. Unbelievable. They dress up as the characters. I went to New York last year to see my publishers. We went out to lunch and this character popped out of the woodwork with a bag of jelly beans which he'd gone and bought specially because he knew I was coming and he was a New York *Doctor Who* fan. Quite a nice gesture, I thought."

Although Dicks left as *Doctor Who* script editor in 1974, he is still associated with the show in fans' minds because of the *Doctor Who* books. The television series became popular in 1963 with the arrival of the Daleks, who spawned a craze that swept the country. There were Dalek mugs, mirrors, wallpaper, badsprads, badgas and books. For some bizarre reason, though, the three *Doctor Who* books issued at the time were published as hardbacks. They sold modestly, but made no great impact. Ten years later, Target Books re-published the novels in paperback with attractive new covers. They sold very well.

According to Terrance Dicks, Targat realised they might be on to a winner, went to the BBC and said "We must have more *Doctor Who* books! Who can we get to write them?" Dicks had always wanted to

write a book, so he said he would: "I wrote the first of what you might call the new wave *Doctor Who* books—*The Auton Invasion*. That sold as well as the others had, maybe even better because it had a newer story." By the time Targat knew they had struck gold, Dicks was leaving as script editor to return to freelance writing (on, among other things, *Space 1999*). Gradually, he became the main writer of the Target novelisations.

"It's an interesting technical challenge," says Dicks: "Taking a television script and turning it into a book. It makes me mad when people say 'Oh, you've got it all done for you'. You admittedly get the dialogue and the basic storyline, but you've got to take everything that's on a television screen and put it on the pages of a book, which is bloody hard work. To make the books work and make them stand up in their own right—as books—is quite a job. I have been doing other things but, whenever I sit down with a pile of *Doctor Who* scripts and a sack of typing paper, I'm happy as a sandboy. I really still enjoy it. I wouldn't do it if I didn't. It's something I know I can do now, so it's a problem but one I can cope with."

Doctor Who got Terrance Dicks started as a book writer and it gave him a track record so that other publishers were interested in his work. His book series now include not just *Doctor Who* but also *The Mounties*, *Star Quest* and *The Baker Street Irregulars*. "The Irregulars," he says, "have sold all round the world to my astonishment. I suppose because it's a transferable idea. I've got additions up there on the shelf in Finnish and Norwegian and Spanish. Come to that, I've got *Doctor Who* books in Japanese! I tend to think in series. It's television



Above: *Doctor* (Tom Baker) as he appeared in the 1975 season of *Doctor Who*. Terrance Dicks was still script editor at this point. Opposite above: A scene from the Dicks-scripted Robot adventure from the first Tom Baker season of *Doctor Who*. Opposite below: Tom Baker and Elizabeth Sladen (as Sarah-Jane Smith) in the *Doctor's* roadster, Bessie.



training. Also, it's a good idea to keep things going if you can. I've done six of the Irregulars now. So I'll leave them for a while. If they continue to sell and there's a demand, I can come back and do six more because it's an infinitely-extensible idea.

"At the moment, I'm in the middle of writing the first in a series of children's horror stories. They're not about the same characters. They are like novels: different characters in each one. But they have the same theme. Each story will have some kind of horror or supernatural theme. The one I'm finishing at the moment is called *Cry Vampire* about a boy who discovers a vampire has moved into his town and nobody will believe him because he's only a kid. And the vampire realises only one person knows what he's up to and he's out to get him. You've got to handle it right, but basically kids love to be scared. They love monsters, ghosts, werewolves, vampires. I did a *Doctor Who* for television recently *State of Decay* which was really a vampire story."

As readers of British Marvel's *Doctor Who* monthly will know, *State of Decay* was originally written three years ago under the title *The Vampire Mutations* but was shelved because the BBC Drama Department was preparing a very expensive co-production of *Dracula* with Louis Jourdan starring and it was felt the *Doctor Who* story might lessen the impact of this major project.

"There are a lot of behind-the-sofa viewers for *Doctor Who*," says Terrance Dicks. "I'd always wanted to do vampires on the show. With horror, what's interesting is to write it in such a way that kids can handle it. You can't be like Stephen King; you can't be *that* scary. What's going to happen in all the horror stories I'm writing is that, eventually, good will triumph. The kid is going to destroy the vampire. The basic message of the book is that there is evil out there, but you can deal with it—which is basically a reassuring thing. In a way, that's possibly healthier than giving a message that life out there is all lovely and sweet, which any kid knows it isn't when he listens to the news."

What with his television scripts and novelisations and original books, Terrance Dicks' work covers a wide area but all of it in the children's field. Does he think this is a danger? "It's less respectable than being an adult novelist, I suppose. But I don't particularly think of myself as being a children's writer. I'm just a writer and one thing came from another. If ever I can get all my commitments for children's books cleared up, I'll probably turn to adult books. But while there are still lots of children's books to be written—I mean, I've got more *Doctor Who* books to do after this and this is a series of six and I've got various other ideas on the stocks that people are interested in. It's certainly no easier to write for children. It's the same as books and television. For some reason, a book writer is thought of as an entirely more respectable class of person. I don't know why that is. Nobody ever asks you for your autograph if you write for television but I've done thousands of autographs since I started doing books—at book-fairs and schools and conventions and all kinds of things. Being a television writer is totally obscure and anonymous. Your name flashes across the screen."

"Everything is swings and roundabouts. Television will make you more money in the short term but, when you've got it, basically that's it. A book won't make you very much money to start with, not compared to television. But, on the other hand, a book has a life of its own and continues. I'm still drawing royalties from the first *Doctor Who* book I ever wrote in 1974. It's now in its third or fourth edition and it's just trundling along out in the world without me having to do another thing. Whenever I get royalties for a book I wrote years ago, it's like winning the football pools. It doesn't occur to me I've done anything to deserve it. So that's very nice. Also, with a book, there's total control and nobody dares muck about with it. Your publishers ring you up and say 'We were thinking of possibly changing a word in line seventeen' and, if you say 'No! No! How dare you!' they say 'Oh—sorry. It was just an idea'. That is not how writers are treated in television. Television is a collaborative medium and you've got to ect with

the script editor and the director, the producer, the actors, all kinds of people who're going to have ideas about it. You've got to defend it or change it or cut it. It's an entirely different operation and some writers can't take that. You've got to be fairly tough, I think, to function in television.

"As I say, it's swings and roundabouts. With books, you have got total control but it is lonely. It's just you and a pile of paper. You don't see anybody, you don't talk to anybody; you don't get any feedback. It's really the most solitary existence imaginable and it's very hard work. Writing for television, though, you get all the interest of the script conferences, meetings with the director and so on. I've gone back to script editing for a bit and I'm working on the BBC's Sunday afternoon Classic Serial (with Barry Letts, ex-producer of *Doctor Who*). What's fascinating is seeing a script right through all the stages of production again. After a week in television, I'm now quite happy it's Saturday night and I'm back writing my book. But it'll be nice for me to get away from this on Monday morning, go back to the BBC, talk to people and discuss things."

So where does Tarrant Dicks go after his work on the Classic Serial?

"Well, I don't know really. My life tends to be totally unplanned. I came to *Doctor Who* purely by chance and I stayed there for six years. When I left that, I got into the book thing by chance. And, just as I was getting solidly established in that, I get an offer to go back to the BBC again and couldn't resist it because I'd had five years of rather solitary working life. Now I'm doing the Classic Serial and keeping up the books in my own time. I don't know. I may go on and do some other television thing. Basically, I feel I'm not really working unless I'm writing. I have a kind of feeling that's what I ought to be doing—writing—because that's what I'm good at and I shouldn't be led off on too many of these other things which are fun but not the same."

Right: Tom Baker poses for a publicity photograph with the car that the Doctor used in the 1975 season. Below right: A scene from the Dicks-scripted *Doctor Who* story, *The Horror of Fang Rock*, with Louise Jameson as the savage, Leela.

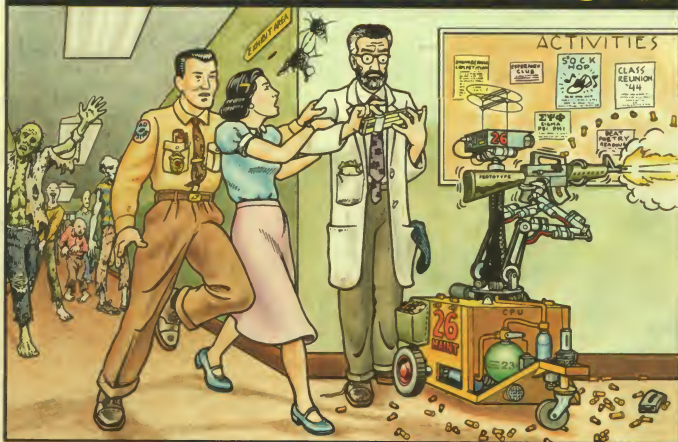




Above: The thick voiced zombies from the Dicks scripted Doctor Who episode, State of Decay. Below: The Doctor and Rose are surrounded by sinister hooded figures in the 1966 episode of the State of Decay adventure. Below right: A scene from the Dicks Doctor Who story, Horror of Fang Rock.



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